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619 and Kupa. Nupe proper differs from Ebe, or Bassa from Žitako, no less
197 than Nupe differs from the languages of the other, related, tribes, Gbari and Kakanda. Dialects, language, language group, or linguistic class—these are all fluid categories, shading over into one another, and none of them capable of being identified with tribe or people.

619 Political group and language group thus imply the existence of the tribe, they do not explain it. The objective reality of political and linguistic organization leaves undefined the nature of that elusive human substratum, tribe or people. Nor can we count on any external symbols of tribal unity to help us with the definition. No tribal costume, or tribal emblems, exist, no tattoos or face-markings characteristic of all Nupe.[1] Yet to the Nupe man himself the Nupe tribe or the Nupe people is a clearly defined, unmistakable entity. He will rarely hesitate whether to describe the population of a district or village as Nupe or to put it down as alien, non-Nupe. This is, of course, an expression of traditional, historically accumulated, and transmitted knowledge. People and tribe themselves represent but the product of complex historical processes, contacts, and ramifications. These processes are no longer traceable to-day; but even if we could trace them they would tell us nothing about the nature of this social fact which we witness to-day, the classification of groups which do not speak the same language and do not live together in 'one country' unified by political organization, under the heading of 'one tribe'. The only definition of tribe that seems possible is the tautological statement that a tribe or people is a group unit the members of which claim to form a group unit. But perhaps there exists some other, objective, social reality which can help us to define this evasive concept?

619 We have not examined yet that paramount social reality, culture. But culture no less than language or living-together seems a fluid criterion of
● 184 tribal unity. The only definition of tribe that we can give in terms of
121 culture is to call the tribe a group possessing more or less the same culture—as it possesses more or less the same language or lives more or less in contiguity and 'togetherness'. In Nupe the unit of culture is in certain respects smaller than the unit of the tribe. The different 'countries' of Nupe represent different, and differently organized, cultural 'provinces'. Culture varies with environment and the productive organization which it entails; it expresses the changing dominant interests involved in social, political, and economic conditions. We can thus speak of a riverain Nupe culture, a hunters' or peasant culture, and distinguish town from rural culture, or the culture of the ruling group from the culture of the subjects and commoners. The cultural unit is also wider than the unit of the tribe. Nupe shares its political and social system with many tribes in West Africa, its traditional religion with neighbouring groups in the north, east, and south, its modern religion, Islam, with the whole Sudan. There is, in fact, good sense in speaking of a West African culture, or a culture of the inland groups of West Africa (as against the culture of the groups in the rain-forest and near the coast). Finally, culture appears also, as it were, crystallized in the form of

[1] See below, p. 22.

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a tribal culture, and the area of cultural unity reveals itself in some respects as coextensive with the tribe.

This is not merely an enumeration of isolated 'traits' selected at random. Each cultural factor which we reviewed affects, and is interdependent with, a wide range of other cultural factors. Culture, as anthropologists are realizing, is not a sum total of discrete traits; it possesses a definite structure and identity; its traits or elements, interdependent and mutually determined, build up a 'pattern' that tends towards coherence and consistency. This consistency—a functional consistency—reveals its existence to the student of the society in those cultural characteristics which he learns to regard as 'typical' or 'non-typical' of a culture. Each of the three cultural units which we enumerated shows, in some measure, the features of this consistency and identity. We will not here probe deeper into the nature of this consistency which seems to crystallize in different degrees of intensity and comprehensiveness. But we must clarify our concept of culture. So far, we have used the word in a rather vague sense. It is not the same culture, the same category of culture, which we discovered in these three relations between cultural and tribal unit. Cultural unity is, speaking generally, unity and correspondence in forms of social behaviour. When speaking of culture units wider than the unit of the tribe, we referred to a correspondence of behaviour among disconnected groups which we as students of cultures and peoples discover, classify, and name; it is a correspondence upheld by the unconscious processes involved in tradition and the perpetuation of custom; it impresses upon the groups a certain external *uniformity*. When speaking of the smaller cultural units which reflect common environmental conditions and common interests, common spheres, that is, of organized social life, we refer to something that goes beyond an externally visible uniformity. We mean a *conformity* of behaviour, a conscious unity created by, and embodied in, a common group life and the mutual control and adjustment of behaviour among the people who form the group.[1] The identification of cultural group and tribe implies, in the observer's interpretation, something of both.

But were this all it would enable us only to define the tribe as a natural species is defined—unknown to the subject of the definition. It would amount to colouring a certain space on a cultural map and calling it 'Nupe tribal culture'. It would not explain the crucial point in our argument, that the people are themselves conscious of the reality of the tribe. But culture has also another, new, meaning: it represents the conception of the people themselves. To the Nupe the tribe possesses a certain culture, specific to it and only to it, irrespective of variations within or similarities with groups without the tribal boundaries. Their awareness of this unity is expressed in the form of almost axiomatic statements, 'the Nupe do this or that', 'this and that is a Nupe custom',

[1] The historian may attempt to link the two, and derive 'uniformity' from an original 'conformity', that is, explain the present cultural correspondence among disconnected groups by cultural diffusion from a centre in which culture was identical with organized common life. But considerations of this kind remain outside this discussion.

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this book we shall be dealing mainly with the political association, which seems characterized by two sets of factors: first, by its inclusiveness, being the relatively widest unit of co-ordination, and, underlining it, by the conception of a collective identity which is emphasized, above all, in inter-group dealings. And second, by the nature of its regulative mechanism (here the 'Government'), which rests, in the last resort, on the employment of force and coercion, and which controls both co-ordination for the purpose of internal stability ('law and order') and co-ordination for the purpose of external, inter-group, action ('offence and defence'). Cultural groups and communities have fluid boundaries; the association (in our case the political unit) is or is not rigid, but its boundaries—the boundaries of the group and sphere of conduct within which the co-ordination is to be valid—are by definition rigid. The consciousness of this validity defines the membership of the political association—in modern terminology, nationality. The political unit, unlike culture and community, is exclusive: one either is or is not a citizen of a country; one either comes or does not come under its laws and restrictions. However, one remains at the same time a representative of a culture which may not simply coincide with the cultural uniformity upheld by the political system. One remains also a member of a community or of communities which may exist apart from the 'common life' embodied in political co-ordination. Planned co-ordination of behaviour cannot ignore these other forms of integration—cultural likeness and commonness. Whether it utilizes them, creates them anew, or simply accepts their existence, they are the cultural raw material out of which it must fashion its unity.

The three planes of integration, and the group units which they define, thus cut across each other, overlap, and possibly grow out of each other, It will not always be easy to separate them clearly in the concrete description. The preceding analysis has to some extent defined their theoretical boundaries. In what follows we can attempt to isolate, in our concrete material, these three social realities: the integration of (conscious) cultural uniformity or the tribe; the integration of cultural conformity or the community; and the cultural co-ordination typical of organized society, above all, the political system and its paradigm, the state.

THE TRIBE

The conception of a common tribal culture is kept alive, as part of Nupe tradition, by the transmission of traditional knowledge. It forms part of the general ideological background of all institutionalized behaviour. For many forms of customary behaviour membership of the tribe constitutes a convincing *raison d'être*. The tribe, lacking all unity of comprehensive co-operation, also lacks the unity of a common centre of cultural teaching. The consciousness of a common tribal culture is thus maintained by the scattered, disconnected mechanism to which the transmission of traditional knowledge is entrusted in Nupe. It is implied in the nature of this transmission that the same *raison d'être*—'we do this

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or that because we are Nupe'—is quoted in support of widely different and divergent cultural activities. In the riverain districts they tell you: 'The Nupe know only two funeral rites, the ceremony of the Eight Days and the ceremony of the Forty Days; but the Mohammedans have introduced a third ritual, the Hundred-and-twenty Days.' Go to the Nupe round Bida or in Trans-Kaduna, and you learn 'that all Nupe perform the Hundred-and-twenty Days'. In Bida they say that 'no Nupe eats eggs, for they make the women sterile'—but in other districts I have seen people eat eggs and think nothing of it. A contradiction?—only so far as concepts which are never checked against reality can imply contradiction.

I have said already that for certain cultural practices the people admit that no general rule can be formulated and that different sections of Nupe follow different practices. But this admission of differentiation is, with regard to actual facts, no less inaccurate than the comprehensive statement about customs that are 'typically Nupe'. The cultural theory which allows for variants in the tribal culture is no less a theory and no less an ideology. This qualified ideology of cultural unity becomes specially important in connexion with another fact, namely, that the Nupe theory of tribal or cultural unity does not imply a belief in common stock or origin of all members or sections of the tribe. On the contrary, the Nupe assume different origin, and subsequent processes of fusion and sometimes differentiation, to account for the existing tribal sections. The Nupe count eleven or twelve such tribal sections or, as I propose to call them, sub-tribes. Here are their names: Ebe, Gbedye or Gbedegi, Kusopa, Benu, Beni, Dibo or Žitako (also known as Gana-Gana among the Hausa), Kyedye or Kede, Ebagi, Bataci, Kupa, Cekpā, and perhaps also Gwagba—a section formed but recently, something between sub-tribe and political faction. One group in Trans-Kaduna, which is believed to represent the oldest section of Nupe, has no second sub-tribal name; the people refer to themselves only as Nupe, or Nupe *zam*, 'pure Nupe'. In this area no real conception of the sub-tribe exists; the different villages regard themselves as independent cultural units, of independent origin, united only by the one, widest link of tribal membership.

The different sub-tribes are supposed to be not only of different origin but also of different age and to have evolved as sub-tribes at different periods. According to Nupe tradition there were five 'original' sub-tribes in existence at the time of the culture-hero of Nupe, Tsoede, of whom we shall hear more presently, namely the Ebe, Beni, Ebagi, Bataci, and Dibo. The origin of the Kyedye and Gbedegi is linked, in this tradition, with the coming of Tsoede. The riverain Kyedye are supposed to have come with him to Nupe country and to have been settled by him all along the river Niger and established as the Lords of the Water and as local rulers over the aboriginal inhabitants of the area, the marsh-dwelling Bataci. The Gbedegi are believed to have been of Yoruba origin, and to have been Nupe-ized by Tsoede and his men. Cekpā and Kupa, the sub-tribes on the southern bank of the Niger, are said to have lived first in the area north of the river, in Nupe proper, but

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in fact, doubtful if a tribe not backed by any political organization could make proselytes on any larger scale.) Later we shall see more clearly how it happens that tribe and kingdom become, for the people, one and the same thing. But the mark of the 'theoretical' tribal distinction is not obscured completely. It is visible in the qualified adoption of these new 'naturalized' sections. They 'have become Nupe'; but they are still called 'Gbari slaves' or Yoruba-Nupe. And perhaps now, since the expanding Nupe kingdom no longer exists, there will be no thirteenth sub-tribe of Kakanda-Nupe, after all.

THE SUB-TRIBE

The fact of common origin which is excluded from the concept of the tribe becomes an essential element in the definition of the sub-tribe. The sub-tribe is thus not a 'tribe' on a smaller scale; it differs essentially from the wider unit of the tribe. If the Nupe tribe possesses no external symbols, costumes, or body markings, such emblems exist to some extent for the sub-tribe. The Nupe practise body and face markings, *etsa*, 'patterns', which are cut into the skin of newborn babies, male and female, and which differ in the different sub-tribes.[1] The sub-tribe, too, has its ideology in which the conception of unity and differentiation from other groups is expressed. The ideological criteria are two: one we have just discussed, the unity of origin and of historical continuity. The other is, again, the criterion of cultural unity. But the physical fact of the smallness of the group as compared with the tribe makes 'culture' here a more concrete, so to speak more concentrated reality. No Nupe term which corresponds to our 'sub-tribe' or 'section' exists. The Nupe refer to the various sub-tribes as to 'lands', they speak of *kin* Beni, land of the Beni, or *kin* Kusopa, land of the Kusopa, and even of *kin* Kyedye, land of the Kyedye, a 'land' which consists of a narrow strip of territory running across river banks and islets. The sub-tribe is thus, like the tribe, a territorial unit. But again the fact of physical size changes the meaning of the concept. The smaller locality is, in fact, more of one 'land'; it implies a more unified environment. This is partly expressed already in the names of the sub-tribes, some of which refer to the nature of the environment in which the group lives and to the nature of the occupation by which it earns its livelihood. The Bataci or Marsh Dwellers are a group of marsh-land farmers and fishermen whose hunting-grounds are the pools and backwaters of the Niger. The Kusopa or Forest Tenders work the famous kola-nut plantations of Laboži and

king of Nupe), or explained the development as due to the fact that '*one Etsu* established his rule (or law) over the whole country'.

[1] I must add, however, that even here these external symbols of group unity are not quite unequivocal. Fashion is changing the markings to-day—and there is no reason to assume that this has not always been so. I have seen fathers and sons whose faces bore different markings. The markings of the Bida people, like other fashions associated with the capital of the kingdom, have been adopted by the people of the districts. And the modern Bida and Beni markings are in turn said to have been adopted originally from the Yoruba, whose less conspicuous facial marks the Nupe found 'nicer' than their own crude slashes. (See Appendix II.)

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Kudu and occupy the rich oil-palm district of Yeti. The name Kyedye, finally, is often used synonymously for all canoe-men and fishermen on the main river. Unity of environment, a uniform productive system, a uniform material culture, represent a first aspect of the cultural unity of the sub-tribe.

Then there is language, certain linguistic differences which throw into relief the cultural boundaries between sub-tribes. The Žitako, Ebe, and Kupa still speak dialects which differ considerably from each other and from the Nupe spoken in the rest of the country. To-day most people in these sub-tribes are bilingual and understand and speak both their own dialect and 'Nupe proper'. The Gbedegi, too, are said to have spoken a special dialect, only a generation or two ago. No trace is left of their language; I found only one old man in Jebba Island who could speak a little Gbedegi. In the area where Nupe proper is spoken only insignificant dialectal differences exist. This linguistic unification within Nupe is the counterpart of the expansion of Nupe language (Nupe proper) and culture beyond the tribal boundaries. Both reflect the same development. The linguistic unification proceeded from the political centre of Nupe kingdom, the area of the Beni, Kyedye, and Bataci sub-tribes. Their dialects, identified with the language of the Nupe state, gradually came to embrace all other tribal sections. The language map of Nupe reveals the phases of this process, the stages in the growth of a supreme, unified culture. We can see the resistance to assimilation increase as we move away from the centre of expansion: the dialects spoken on the borders of the kingdom are losing their identity more slowly and more reluctantly than the dialects of the groups in the centre. The last phase of this development is not yet completed. We are yet to see the full Nupe-ization of Žitako, Ebe, and Kupa.

But in the centre of this expansion the differentiation between cultural centre and periphery gains a new meaning. It is conceived of as a differentiation not of dialects representative of tribal sections, but of dialects, or forms of *patois*, representative of a cultural and social milieu and upbringing. To-day we have a Bida-Nupe, a 'higher', more refined Nupe (a Nupe which, for example, has replaced many Nupe words by words adopted from Hausa and Arabic); and we have, besides, the cruder, 'low', peasant Nupe—sometimes called 'pagan' Nupe—spoken in the districts. However, this new attitude towards cultural differences, this evaluation on the scale of a 'lower' and 'higher', a more or less refined culture, belongs to another chapter.

The cultural unity of the sub-tribe manifests itself also in the religious field. Certain cults and rituals are peculiar to single sub-tribes, and inter-tribal contact and assimilation have hardly obscured these cultural boundaries. Certain cults, bound up with conditions of environment, seem linked naturally to special areas: a sacrifice to the mythical ancestor of kola-nut planting among the Kusopa; cults which have to do with the water, with floods, with the dangers of the river, and success and safety in fishing, among the riverain groups. The *elo* ritual, and the *mamma* cult, masked ceremonies, are known only among the Gbedegi; the *tikinta* among the Ebe, the *gani* among the Benu, the 'white' *gunnu*

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among the tribes on the southern bank of the Niger, and (a negative evidence mentioned already) the *ndakó gboyá*, which is regarded as 'typical' Nupe by Hausa and Yoruba, is unknown among Dibo and Ebe. There are also other rituals and cults which cannot be assigned (at least not to-day) to a certain sub-tribe, and finally rituals and cults which represent the cultural possession of single village communities. In brief, the possession of a common cult means only an external uniformity of culture. None of these rituals implies co-operation and actual contact in the group at large. They are still but the expression of parallel, 'like', behaviour and not of concrete co-activity and 'togetherness'.

This is equally true of the other cultural features on which the cultural identity of the sub-tribe rests. The consciousness of a cultural uniformity is supported by the actual existing uniformity. But there is still no organized centre of co-activity behind this uniformity or behind the transmission of the consciousness of this uniformity. We can only say this: the sub-tribe, much more than the tribe, constitutes a potentiality of such co-activity and intensive 'togetherness'. The links of a common language, of similar economic pursuits, similar interests, parallel religious ideas, may grow easily into links of co-operation and 'togetherness'. Only in two cases, however, has this potentiality become reality—among the two sub-tribes Kyedye and Beni. In no other section are there contacts and forms of co-activity which make the sub-tribe 'one country', and its people 'one group'. How, then, does that cultural uniformity crystallize into the unified, conscious commonness of 'one country'?

I have described elsewhere the growth and organization of one of the two sub-tribes which have evolved such unified structure.[1] Let me repeat here the main facts. The growth of the Kyedye organization was the growth of a colonizing and conquering group. Expanding from one centre—Muregi, near the confluence of Niger and Kaduna—the Kyedye established themselves in the course of time all along the river banks. They built their settlements on the land of the aboriginal sections, Bataci and riverain Gbedegi, and claimed rulership over them. Twin villages arose, half Kyedye and half Bataci or Gbedegi, from which the Kyedye administered the district, assuming judicial authority and levying taxes. This colonization is still going on, and their rulership, rigidly centralized, is still alive and undisputed.[2] Close contact, intermarriage, and regular new emigration link the settlements, old and new, capital and colonies. Delegates from Muregi, relatives of the Kyedye chief, reside in the settlements, and these administrative 'posts' are correlated with the ranks which the delegates hold in the Kyedye hierarchy; promotion in rank involves promotion to a more important as well as more lucrative post. This closely knit ruling group precludes all permanent links between the cultural groups which this political development has thrown

[1] See 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria', in *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, London, 1940, pp. 165–95.

[2] Only twenty or thirty years ago have the Kyedye established themselves on the river Kaduna, or on Jebba Island, a place which had only then become of economic importance.

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together. There is no intermarriage, and almost no cultural give-and-take; to-day the Kyedye are Mohammedans (or semi-Mohammedans), but the Bataci and Gbedegi have remained pagans. Yet in one significant field cultural unity has evolved, over and above the differences of culture, tribal origin, and social status, and over and above also the co-operation embodied in the political structure. With the political rulership the Kyedye have assumed spiritual authority as well; myths and sacred insignia confirm the position of the *Kuta*, the Kyedye chief, as the ruler over the whole riverain area and its people; and two most important sacrifices to the river Niger, which secure large catches and safety from floods, the *hetsú* and *nddduma*, are linked with his person and office. Every new appointed *Kuta* will send one of his near relations to Jebba and Buka, the two places where these sacrifices are performed, with two white bulls to be sacrificed to the river spirits by the priests of these cults. By these sacrifices the chief secures 'greatness' for himself, and success and welfare for his subjects.

The Beni organization presents an entirely different picture. Unlike the Kyedye system it exists no longer; it was broken and destroyed by the Fulani conquest. It took the form of a confederacy formed by the twelve 'towns' of the Beni: Bida, Tafiĕ, Esā, Doko, Towagi, Egbe, Gaba, Nupeko, Eda, Panjuru, Ewu, Yesa. The political bonds were twofold: the twelve towns recognized the supremacy of one town, and paid a small tribute to its chief, or 'town-king'; further, in case of war, the twelve towns were bound to fight together and to support each other, again under the leadership of one town.[1] Mythology, and the existence of certain common sacred insignia of the twelve town-kings of Beni, supply the spiritual background for the political unity. Moreover, the *gunnu* cult, this most important religious cult of Nupe, appears among the Beni in a special form, namely, as a cult which utilizes comprehensive co-operation between the priests of the whole country, thus underlining, in the religious sphere, the unification of the sub-tribal section.[2]

One might ask why it was that just these two sub-tribes evolved a comprehensive political and cultural unit. The origin of the Beni confederacy is hidden in the dim past of a Nupe of which we have no records. As regards the Kyedye we can, to some extent, answer the question. In the environment of the river valley, and in the pursuits of a riverain people, lies the germ of territorial and political expansion. Long fishing expeditions, an extensive river trade, on which the livelihood of this riverain group depends, demand extension of political influence as security for the very wide area of their economic activities. Trading-posts become political outposts, and fishing colonies become strongholds of territorial expansion. The spirit of adventure and enterprise, finally, which alone could have built up this efficient organization, is part of the life of this riverain people.

Of the enterprising spirit of Kyedye chiefs, born colonizers and

[1] This chief town of the Beni seems to have been Tafiĕ till the Fulani conquest; after that the headship passed to Bida, till it disappeared finally with the absorption of the Beni confederacy in Nupe Emirate (see p. 82).

[2] See *J.R.A.I.* lxvii, 1937, p. 98.

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pioneers, the history of the Royal Niger Company can give many instances. But let us read these examples correctly. They show, first, that political integration tends to widen its basis so as to embrace all spheres of cultural activity; political unification calls into being other forms of contact and co-activity, and thus cements its own unity with the help of a more comprehensive and more intimate 'togetherness'. But these examples show also that the creation of such co-activity and togetherness does not simply follow from the potentiality of cultural uniformity. In the case of the Beni confederacy cultural uniformity appears intensified into co-activity and togetherness; among the Kyedye the political fusion of different sub-tribes, different cultural areas, created the wider area of co-activity and common life. Obviously, the nature of this co-activity and common life is different in each case. The commonness that grows from uniform culture and the commonness that is superimposed upon a cultural diversity represent two different social realities. What we have said above of the links of cultural uniformity which 'grow easily into links of co-activity and togetherness' was not, therefore, quite correct. We have before us not a simple quasi-automatic process of 'growth', but two specific, alternative forms of social development.

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623 554 economic control which he exercises, by granting him access to special economic resources (above all, fruit-bearing trees) unattainable to the other members of his group. Thus supported, the titled family head is qualified to assume his double role, as official agent of the community at large and as representative of his group *vis-à-vis* the village community.

The relation between the two roles and their relative preponderance varies with the rank which an elder may attain. For the *nūsa* ranks are not of equal order. They are defined by strict order of precedence, and there is never any doubt which title ranks higher or lower. The measure of political responsibility closely corresponds to the place in the scale of village ranks. In some villages we even find a formal distinction between the 'great' and 'small' ranks, the former three or (more often) four in number, forming as it were the 'inner council'. Where the village is arranged in a number of separate large clusters of compounds (as in Doko, Kutigi, or Sakpe), the distinction between 'great' and 'small' ranks also implies a distinction between headship over the whole cluster of compounds, the *efu*, and headship over single compounds or 'houses' only.[1] The professional ranks of blacksmiths and drummers are always at the bottom of the list of village ranks. The political importance of the rank of the Head of the Hunters and of the ranks which are combined with priestly offices differs in different communities.

623 It would be wrong to think of the village council of elders as of an elaborate, rigidly formalized, instrument of government. The full council is rarely summoned except on important occasions, such as the election of a chief, or the visit of the *Etsu* and his delegates or the District Officer. The normal routine work of village government is carried on by the chief and his 'inner council' of two or three elders of highest rank. And here again we have no formal appointed assembly, but rather casual meetings in the houses of the chief or of one of the elders, at which current questions are discussed and the necessary decisions taken. If more elders have to be consulted or instructed, a messenger will be sent to their houses, or they will call individually at the house of the chief or the head *nūsa*. If in the case of the *nūsaši* of high rank their position of authority transcends the component groups to the headship of which they have risen in virtue of their kinship position, this latter aspect preponderates in the case of the *nūsaši* of lesser rank who are excluded from the 'inner council'. They are executive organs of the village in the indirect sense of intermediaries through whom decisions of the chief and the leading elders reach the various kinship and local groups, and through whom, in turn, these groups can voice claims and interests so far as they call for action on the part of the community.

623 554 184 The graded scale of village ranks does not command an unequivocal corresponding system of appointment and succession. Succession to the lowest, professional, ranks is invariably hereditary. So is succession to the priestly ranks or the ranks linked with a priestly office: the secret

[801] [1] In eastern Nupe, especially among Dibo and Beni, the number four plays an important part in the arrangement of *efu* as well as in the order of ranks. We find four *efu* and four ranks, or four head ranks and four secondary ranks, or four ranks plus the chief's rank.

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623 554 184 of the ritual office remains vested in one family group. But succession to the other ranks involves a certain ambiguous situation. Only a few communities have worked out the principle of precedence consistently, evolving a system of promotion from lower to higher rank—Jebba Island and Mokwa are examples. In these communities every vacancy is made an occasion for a reshuffle of the ranks. A *nūsa* whose seniority and standing qualify him for the rank that has fallen vacant is appointed, his own rank going to another *nūsa* deserving promotion, and so forth, till finally one of the lowest ranks becomes vacant, which is then duly bestowed on a fitting, as yet untitled, candidate. But in other communities all promotion from one rank to another is excluded, the titles in almost caste-like rigidity remain linked with 'houses', and a man can claim only this one title whether or not it is one for which his age, experience, and personality would qualify him.[1] The people are themselves well aware of this ambiguity. It is overcome, in practice, in various ways. First, the appointment to the rank which has fallen vacant may be postponed till the candidate has reached the age and gained the status appropriate to the rank; a 'young man' of Kutigi (he was about 45) had been waiting for ten years for the title which his father's brother had held before and which had been 'reserved' for him; every time I saw him and asked how his affair stood, he replied with the same words: *n'wa ke degi*, 'just a little longer'. Or one may introduce new titles, intermediary ranks, by which device the rigid order of traditional ranks is circumvented. Finally, hereditary succession in Nupe is never understood in the narrow sense of a quasi-automatic appointment. Often it is a selection from a number of candidates of suitable seniority—younger brothers or eldest sons (in the classificatory sense) of the deceased. Though seniority counts above all, old age and debility will disable a prospective successor to family headship. Apart from seniority, other attributes are also essential: good reputation, skill and experience as farmer, a friendly temper, and good health; a leper or a man suffering from elephantiasis or blindness is ineligible; so is a complete invalid. But so long as his impediment (e.g. a short leg, a crooked arm) does not interfere with his work on the land and his ability to move about, it does not matter. The main attribute is *ánkali*—intelligence. In Kutigi a serious quarrel had broken out between the chief and some of his elders who refused to give their consent to the appointment to a high rank of a man whom they considered 'to have no brains'.

623 The following genealogy illustrates the succession to the position of a certain titled family head, the *Ndagoro* of Mokwa. We

[1] An interesting transition from hereditary ranks to ranks of the promotion type has evolved in Faže, a village in Ebe country. Only recently the former system of hereditary ranks was replaced in this village by a promotion system, the depopulation of the village in the Fulani wars having made this step necessary; for some of the families in which the most important ranks had been vested had died out, and only promotion from lower to higher ranks could prevent this untoward vacancy. This local development cannot, for various reasons, be taken as affording the explanation of the origin of the promotion system of *nūsa* ranks in Nupe. But it clearly shows that the people are aware of the inherent conflict between the rank system based on precedence and the strict rule of hereditary succession.

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623 The meetings (which I have had many opportunities of attending) are quiet and dignified, the discussion flows slowly, no loud word is spoken; the young men are mostly silent, only the elder ones take part. If controversies or disagreements occur, they are never apparent in the discussion itself. Rather they reveal themselves in the disconcerting practice that what had seemed to be happily settled in one discussion will be questioned again in the next; and men whose agreement seemed to be successfully secured to-day will call another meeting of their own to-morrow or the next day and start the discussion all over again.

The appointment to a new rank is a matter of little ceremony. It is identical with the modest ceremonial that accompanies succession to the position of a family head (to be described in a later chapter) with which, in fact, it frequently coincides. Appointments to high *nũsa* ranks usually fall in the long period of mourning for the late holder of the rank, and so exclude any festivity or general celebration. Appointment to a new rank, which would mostly fall to a comparatively young man, is sometimes made the occasion of a little feasting: beer or palm-wine for the guests and a dance in the afternoon and evening to which neighbours, friends, and above all the comrades from the age-grade association are invited. But more often there is nothing; the selected candidate would be summoned to the chief's house before the assembled council of elders, and would be informed that *nw'a gi Tsowa*, 'he had been appointed (lit. had eaten) *Tsowa*', or some other such rank, and that is all. Only by the self-importance with which the new *nũsa* carries himself in the next few days or weeks will you be able to say that this had indeed been an important occasion. If by mistake you address him by his old title, he—or others who know—will put you right at once.

623 609 123 Perhaps I should mention that I have myself gone through this experience when the people of Jebba Island decided to bestow a rank on me, who had become in their eyes a 'full Nupe', and who at any rate was insisting on being treated as one when it came to religious meetings or confidential discussions of village matters. I had to make a few small presents (from which even a 'real' *nũsa*-candidate might not be exempted) to chief and elders; they were 'sitting' for three days, discussing the most suitable title, till eventually the senior *nũsa* informed me that I had been given the title *Shaba* (a very high rank but, needless to say, introduced *ad hoc*, and copied from the rank-list of other villages). A day or two after my appointment I walked through the village and met some people [576] who used the customary greeting for Europeans, *zaki*; but my companions called the people sharply to order, informing them that I was *Shaba* of Jebba now, which information at once elicited the greeting corresponding to the *Shaba* rank, *gbako nyenkpa* (body of iron). In a week or two there was nobody within ten miles of the place who did not know of my new rank.

CHIEFTAINSHIP

622 184 Chieftainship in Nupe is, like the system of *nũsa* ranks, characterized by the coexistence of two systems of succession: promotion and hereditary succession. In Jebba and Mokwa the chief's rank is merely the

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highest in the order of village ranks, and one of the senior elders of the village is promoted to the position of the chief. In all other areas chieftainship is hereditary and bound up with one 'house'. Chieftainship of the promotion type goes invariably hand in hand with a rank system of promotion type. But hereditary chieftainship does not invariably imply hereditary *nūsa* ranks. In Dibo country, for example, chieftainship is hereditary, but the *nūsa* ranks in some villages follow promotion. The elected chief is by no means regarded as less closely identified with the village which he 'owns' than the hereditary chief. The rule that he assumes the name of 'his' village as title holds good both for elected and hereditary chiefs: the *Gebba* of Jebba (Gebba) is, as we have just seen, an elected chief.

Neither chieftainship by election nor hereditary chieftainship implies an automatic, rigidly fixed, succession. Under the former, any elder who has reached an important rank is eligible for the final promotion. The latitude which this arrangement allows is illustrated in the succession to the chieftainship in Mokwa, where, in the case of the last five chiefs, the following rank-holders were elected as chiefs: *Sámaza*, the fourth on the village rank-list, *Sojekó*, the second on the village rank-list, *Majī Bagidi*, the eighth, and *Sarkin Zongu*; this last rank, borrowed from Hausa, has been abandoned during the régime of the present chief. It was attached to the position of a caretaker in the camp prepared for the trading caravans stopping at Mokwa—a responsible and lucrative, though from traditional point of view inferior, post. (See chart I, p. 54.)

Hereditary succession to chieftainship follows the same elastic rule which governs succession to hereditary *nūsa* ranks.[1] A few communities have adopted the practice of appointing beforehand the successor to chieftainship, an 'heir presumptive', mostly known by the title *Shaba*. But it can be shown that this practice is of comparatively recent origin, in fact, a copy of the system of succession characteristic of Nupe kingship. The larger the family group or 'house' of the hereditary chief, the more scope there is for the selection of a fitting successor. Expansion of the chieftain family may lead to a splitting-up of the 'house' as a result of which the chief's office, vested in two or more related houses, is taken in rotation by these families. In at least one case hereditary succession itself was abandoned, and replaced by free election: in Doko the line of hereditary succession was interrupted two generations ago, and a 'new man', a man of outstanding ability, was appointed as successor by the old chief and accordingly 'elected' later by the elders of the village. The genealogy of the Doko chiefs (p. 52) up to the appointment of this 'new man' may illustrate the latitude allowed even in strictly hereditary chieftainship. We see that sons, grandsons, younger brothers, and brothers' sons are all equally admitted to the succession of village chieftainship.

The appointment or election of the new chief is a matter for the council of elders. It is presided over by a certain *nūsa* of high rank who is in many places called *Ndeji* (a corrupted form of *Ndeẓi*, viz. *nda eẓi*),

[1] In one village, Etsú, I found matrilineal succession to hereditary chieftainship, through the mother's brother's son, although in all other respects the rules of inheritance were the same as everywhere else in Nupe. I am unable to explain this isolated instance, unless perhaps historically.

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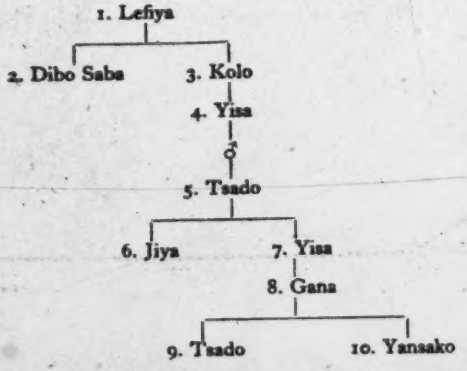
Genealogy of Doko Chiefs



Father of the Town, and who stands somewhat apart from the other village ranks. He plays the part of the chief 'elector' or 'king-maker'; he is never himself a candidate for chieftainship, but is entrusted with the rule of the village during the interregnum. We shall hear more of him presently. The Nupe dislike a long interregnum: as a rule only a few weeks, filled out with discussions and the consultation of diviners, elapse before the appointment of a new chief.[1] This appointment will eventually need the confirmation of the *Etsu* Nupe and, to-day, of the Administrative Officer. This last rule, however, applies only to those chiefs who are recognized as official Village Heads under the modern Native Administration. In the reorganization of the Emirate under British rule only the larger villages have been created seats of official Village Heads. Their number does not comprise all the places which are 'villages' or 'towns' in traditional native conception.[2] A significant terminological dualism has been the result: the people speak of *Zitsu*, 'town-king', when referring to their traditional, officially unrecognized, chief, and call the officially appointed Village Head *Etsu Nyenkpa*, 'Money Chief' (i.e. tax chief).

I can offer no explanation for the coexistence of these two different systems of chieftainship, of hereditary and promotion type. There is no evidence of either having developed from the other. Nor can local conditions, economic factors, or the factors of size and population be made responsible. But I could discover the sociologically interesting correlation between the system of succession and the religious elements which surround Nupe chieftainship. In the villages where chieftainship is hereditary we find that vague mythology of origin which tells of the first occupation of the land, and of the foundation of the village by the

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[1] I have been told that formerly unanimity between the various diviners of the village was considered necessary. In Mokwa my informants stated that the normal duration of the 'interregnum' is ten days.

[2] In connexion with a scheme to raise the salary of Village Heads the number of Village Headships in Bida Emirate has recently been further reduced.

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ancestor of the present chief. A certain special magic and sacred insignia are linked with the house in which chieftainship is vested. Thus the chiefs of various Beni villages and of Sakpe possess the brass bangles of Tsoede; chiefs in Dibo country an iron staff; chiefs in the riverain area the sacred chain of Tsoede. The magic ritual which is associated with chieftainship varies as widely: in Doko it is a harvest rite, the 'eating of the bulrush-millet'; in other villages it appears as magic against barrenness, as a rain sacrifice, an ordeal, or as a general rite to secure health and prosperity of the community. But invariably the chief's ritual, whatever its more specific aim, will be performed as funeral rite and ceremony of installation of chiefs, and also whenever certain great calamities befall the community—a drought, famine, or epidemic. The chief is not himself the priest of this magic, and often has not the insignia in his own possession. Insignia and magic are entrusted to another member of the chief's family. The office of the *Žigi*, the village priest, is kept in the junior branch of the chieftain house, and *Žitsu* and *Žigi*, Town-king and Town-priest, appear in the genealogies as elder and younger brother (in the classificatory sense).[1]

In the communities, on the other hand, where the chief is elected from the senior rank-holders, his house 'owns' no special magic or insignia, and there is no mythology of a founder of the village, but tradition speaks of the village as having 'always been there'. The religious duties fall, instead, to the *nûsa* who acts as chief 'elector' and who is entrusted with the rule of the village during an interregnum. This man's office will be hereditary and sacred, he will own insignia or a special powerful magic, which is, again, invoked at the death and the appointment of chiefs or in the case of great calamities. A supernatural agency, a mystic safeguard, is thus always assumed behind the chief's authority. But Nupe village organization has evolved two different solutions, in accordance with the two different systems of chieftain succession: one makes the chief or his family the agents of the supernatural power which supports the claim to chieftainship; the other separates the political rule from the mystic safeguard and, instead of a hereditary king, brings into being a hereditary 'king-maker'. (See chart II, p. 55).

This division of religious and secular office seems to eliminate effectively conflicts between chief and priest. The priests of the village cults, experts in religious matters only, have no influence in political affairs; they are, as we saw, not even granted the general prerogative of their age: a seat on the council of elders. The priest of the chief's cult, if of the chief's family, is classed as a 'younger brother' and thus equally barred from the position of an influential elder. Only the priest-king-maker (where he exists) could gain the position of a rival power and interfere with secular affairs. However, by his office the main 'elector' of the chief, he should be a supporter and ally of the chief, whose office reflects to some extent his own authority, rather than his adversary or rival. He may prefer a puppet at the head of the village—I saw an instance

[1] See the genealogy given in chart II, p. 55.

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I

Rank System from Mokwa (Promotion Type)

Rank order	*Title*	*Office*	*Locality ('efu' or 'eni')*	*Succession*	*Insignia, magic, &c.*	*Remarks*
1	*Lile*	Chief	Efugbo or *efu* Lile	Promotion	..	Present chief was promoted to chief-tainship from rank *Sarkin Zongu*
2	*Shabo Lile*	..	Gunmabo (so called because *gunmu* priest lives here)	,,	..	Title introduced under Fulani influence; replaced original title *Sojaké*.
3	*Ndeshi* (Sheshi)	'King-maker'	Ilancita	Hereditary	Sacred chain, priesthood of Tsoede	Title *Ndeshi* corresponds to *Ndeshi*, 'Father of the Town'.
3a	*Guye*	Successor to 3	Etisheshi and Korofugi	Hereditary in family of *Ndeshi*[1]	..	..
3b	*Tswashe*	Successor to 3a	Ntaci	As 3a	..	..
4	*Sdwaya*	..	Gbaye and Yafu	Promotion	..	Was promoted to present rank from *Tsonkwa*.
5	*Ndagoro*	..	Goro	,,	..	..
6	*Maji Koshegbe*	..	Kpege	,,	..	Newly introduced rank.
7	*Tsonkwa* (Tswoa)	..	*eni* Ndakogi	,,	..	..
8	*Maji Bagidi*	..	Ilancita	,,	..	..
9	*Maji Dende*	..	,,	,,	..	..
10	*Maji nya Kota*	..	Goro	,,	..	..
11	*Maji Guye*	..	Kpege	,,	..	..
12	*Maji Tswaci*	Head of Blacksmiths	Tswata	Hereditary	..	..
13	*Etsu Dsil*	Head of Drummers	*eni* Dzesi	,,	..	..
13a	*Shabo Dsil*	Successor to 13	*eni* Dzesi	Hereditary in house of *Etsu Dsil*[2]	..	..
*	*Wangwa*	..	*efu* Wangwa	..	..	This rank no longer exists. The position of the head of the *efu* has fallen, quasi-unofficially, to the *Liman*, the Mohammedan priest, who is not yet, however, officially admitted into the village council.

[1] These secondary ranks defining succession to the hereditary rank of 'king-maker' I have found only in Mokwa. The *Sheshi*, *Guye*, and *Tswashe* regard each other as elder and younger brothers respectively. I was told that originally the office of *Sheshi* was inherited matrilineally, and that this is the explanation why it has become divided between three kinship sections living in different *efu*. Though this explanation is, logically, incorrect, and although these three offices have actually been inherited in paternal line since the people can remember, the fact remains that the three groups which succeed each other in rotation are vaguely thought of as of matrilineal origin. The aloofness from the other village ranks which characterizes the office of the 'king-maker' is thus further enhanced by the different conception of succession.

[2] Secondary professional ranks of this kind are found also in other craftsmen groups, e.g. blacksmiths. Sometimes there exists also a third rank of this order, with the title *Kpota*. This organization of craftsmen ranks will be discussed in Chapter XIV.

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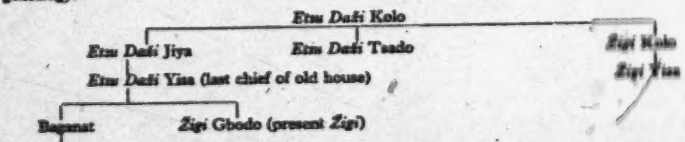
II

Rank System from Doko (Hereditary Type)

Rank order	*Title*	*Office*	*Locality ('efu')*	*Succession*	*Insignia, magic, &c.*	*Remarks*
1	*Etsu Dafi*	Chief	Dafi	Hereditary	Sacred bangles, chief's ritual	*Zigi* (priest) is of chief's family.[1]
2	*Shaba*	..	In *tunga*	A relation of chief, promoted to present rank from *Lile* at death of late *Shaba*, 1935	..	Newly introduced title, copied from Bida ranks.
3	*Lile*	Formerly 'Heir Presumptive'	Dafi	Present holder chief's younger brother	..	..
4	*Kpotii*	..	,,	Present holder chief's elder brother (died 1936)	..	Newly introduced title, copied from Bida.
5	*Maki*	..	,,	Tentatively introduced (see p. 56)	..	As 2 and 4
6	*Ndefe*	..	Edoko	Hereditary in one 'house'	..	..
7	*Dzuko*	..	Takogi	,,	..	..
8	*Boke*	..	Kpacinefu	,,	..	..
9	*Shabaefi*	..	Ndadofu	,,	..	..
10	*Bodo*	..	Dafi	,,	..	..
11	*Zitsu Bobi*	..	Edoko	,,	..	..
12	*Maji*	..	,,	,,	..	..
13	*Maji Egbe* (or *Ndako*)	Head of Hunters	,,	,,	..	..

[1] The typical relationship between *Zitsu* and *Zigi*, chief and priest of the chief's ritual, as described above exists no longer, as the present chief comes from a new family. The relationship between chief and priest as it existed in the original chief's dynasty is shown in the attached genealogy.



of this: a young man, son of the late chief, but inexperienced, timid and unintelligent, had been put forward as candidate by the 'king-maker', himself a shrewd and keen man, when the Administration looked for a successor to the vacant chieftainship of Sakpe. (The young chief, whose rule not unnaturally proved a failure, was deposed after two years.) But such cases are rare. As a rule the division of secular and priestly office works out harmoniously. Only once did I find an open conflict; but it revealed, not a failure of the established system, but rather a departure from it, brought about by extraneous influences.

It was the case of the chiefs of Doko, to which I have already referred. Here the kinship bond between chief and priest, *Zitsu* and *Zigi*, had been dissolved when the new family succeeded to the chieftainship. The priest of the chief's ritual became, from the priestly partner in the two-fold office of chieftainship, an independent, and thus dangerous, agent. The descendant of the original chief's family, a young man, Ndako Gana by name, used the spiritual power vested in his house as a weapon

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their class origin. There is no sphere of life, not even an ordinary social gathering, in which the representatives of the various classes can meet, as it were, on 'neutral ground'.

The social stratification stretches beyond the formalized rank system embodied in the political structure. It embraces the whole country and absorbs and reinterprets in its own sense the cultural configuration of Nupe at large. On this wider scale the commoners of the town, the people of no name and title, rank higher than the people and tribes outside the capital, with their petty village titles and offices. The citizens of Bida look down upon the *gberiši*, the 'heathen' in the villages, ridiculing their habits and character, their fashions and the way they talk, their lack of education and 'urbanity'.

These differences of customs and habits are real enough. But they are underlined on the part of the Bida people by that credulity and fondness of exaggeration which we encountered already in the discussion of the village community and which, here even more strongly, expresses the biased self-centred interest of a group strongly conscious of its cultural identity. I have recorded many sensational accounts of the religious customs of the *gberiši* in which the Bida people firmly believe, unaware, or unwilling to admit, that they are quite untrue. Bida informants told me that among the peasants and pagans women practise the craft of medicine and not men as in Bida—another statement which I could easily disprove. Or I was warned not to believe anything that villagers say—'they are all liars'. Even if it were possible to test quantitatively this collective libel, it would, I am afraid, hardly reveal any real difference between town and country. What I have called, in the discussion of the village community, an ideology sustaining the assertion of group identity subserves here the assertion of (in a loose sense) class distinctions.

To return to the real, concrete, cultural differences linked with class. The framework of status which we have outlined is filled out with a multitude of minor traits, differences of conduct, extending even to walks of life which may appear only remotely connected with the central political and economic structure. We shall meet with these differences in every stage of our investigation; let me anticipate here a few typical instances as they would strike the observer of Nupe everyday life. He would note class differences even in one of the most elementary wants—nutrition: rich and poor have different food habits. The poor eat little meat, chicken very rarely (unless for religious reasons); but meat cooked in palm-oil is eaten every day by the wealthy, and chicken-and-rice, the most delicious food the Nupe know, comes on the table at least once a week. In Bida the sorghum or millet grain is always milled to fine flour; in some peasant districts it is boiled unmilled—a preparation of food which the more refined despise, although it is undoubtedly of higher nutritive value. The people of Bida drink palm-wine, the peasants in the districts feast on sorghum-beer.

Again, in the matter of recreation: among the peasants the men dance to the music of flutes and drums, or the women sing to the clapping of hands or the beating of upturned calabashes. Among the sophisticated

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people of Bida professional women singers, accompanied by their own drummers, perform for an audience which pays for its pleasures. The uneducated pagans like to sit together on afternoons and evenings in front of their houses, chat or weave mats, or just enjoy the peace of these hours of leisure. The educated Mohammedans meet in the house of a Mallam and read with him the holy books of Islam, using even their leisure hours for furthering their education.

As regards dress: a man of standing would always, even in the privacy of his home, wear trousers and the flowing white robe, and would never appear before guests and strangers without turban. Peasants and commoners normally wear a loin-cloth and a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder, and the blue Phrygian cap which is said to be the traditional head-gear of Nupe. Only on state occasions would they don robe and turban.

People of rank have adopted, with Mohammedanism, many features of Hausa culture. In their families the Hausa custom of removing the uvula of small children is practised—a custom absent among the lower classes and unknown among the peasants. They are fond of using Hausa words and phrases; for expressions concerning the delicate topic of sex they invariably use Hausa or Arabic circumlocutions. They despise the peasants and uneducated people of the lower classes who use the crude literal expression, and who cannot embellish their speech with the more elegant phrases borrowed from Hausa.

The various features enumerated above are clearly not of the same order. Characteristic though they are of the standards valid in the different strata of Nupe society they are not equally reducible to the central facts of class structure—political and economic conditions. The evaluation of certain habits as inferior or superior is as much a matter of convention as a result of social or economic inequality. That the poor man cannot afford meat or chicken-and-rice is due to his poverty; but the preference for milled or unmilled grain or for palm-wine or sorghum-beer respectively, is a matter of taste and habit, i.e. a 'cultural' trait pure and proper. Yet rendered permanent by education, linked with habitual group-behaviour which in other, more vital, spheres of life positively reflects economic or social prerogatives, these smaller traits, too, gain the significance of class-determined behaviour. Here we grasp another aspect of class differentiation. I have said that where the attribute of inferiority or superiority is disregarded, differences of habit and living conditions in general are reduced to cultural differences in the narrow sense. This gains special significance in a society like Nupe, which has grown out of a conglomerate of various tribal groups, each with its own more or less specific culture. Some of the food habits of the 'poor' peasants are indeed the original food habits of cultural groups which have been incorporated into the kingdom. I have mentioned that the Phrygian cap, worn by peasants and commoners, is regarded as the traditional head-dress of the country. Their 'uncouth' manners, their 'primitive' customs, are part of the pagan peasant culture of the country. Similarly turban and flowing robes, or the appreciation of professional musicians and Mohammedan learning, reflect the preferences of a specific cultural

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group, the 'town culture' typical of Northern Nigeria. These habits and customs exist, as it were, in their own right, quite apart from questions of economic or political opportunity. But as in the growth of the kingdom certain customs and habits have become representative of the *élite*, they have set the standard of cultural desirability and superiority in general. They have imparted to habits and customs which differ from the standard the stigma of lower, less 'respectable' ways of life. In this sense, then, class differentiation as we find it in present-day Nupe can be said to represent a direct result of the growth of the state.

The intensity of class cohesion and the vividness of class consciousness are determined by 'the amount and ease of social mobility', that is, inter-class movement.[1] We have denied to the economic and social stratification that obtains in the Nupe village the character of a social class, on the grounds that the higher and highest social orders were potentially attainable to all—universal mobility contradicts the conception of social class. Exclusion of all social mobility, on the other hand, would turn social class into hereditary caste. Nupe society, a true class society, steers a middle course.

The social classes in Nupe represent to a large extent self-recruited, closed groups. A man born of commoners as a rule remains a commoner, a craftsman a craftsman, and the ranks of nobility are filled with men of noble birth. But there exists promotion from grade to grade within the class, and a certain amount of inter-class mobility. Inter-class mobility in the fullest sense, that is, formal adoption into the higher orders, is attained, as we have seen, through service in war and, to less extent, through wealth and clientship. Its scope is narrow and closely controlled: there exist only thirty to forty ranks to which an 'outsider' may aspire, and only seven out of the thirty-seven civil and military ranks enumerated in our lists were granted to men whose families had held no rank previously. Moreover, adoption into the titled classes means only gaining a first foothold on the long social ladder. All social rise possible in Nupe is rigidly canalized by the hierarchy of ranks and grades. Here, viewed from the angle of social mobility, the Nupe rank system reveals its full significance: it controls and restricts as much as it aids social advancement. In the interest of governing the extensive kingdom, carrying on its wars, and administering its subject groups, political power had to be distributed and delegated. Individuals whose services were of value had to be attracted by the promise of admission to privileged positions. But by making social rise subject to the formal investiture and, above all, by admitting individuals only gradually, through a step-by-step promotion, to increased power, the ruling class could regulate the infiltration of new blood as well as the accumulation of power by its members. We have seen that ranks and promotion are subject to changing political fortune; even the meaning of ranks and offices may change under different sovereigns. Recognition can be withheld or withdrawn from men who might prove dangerous or from families already too powerful. The hierarchy of ranks thus helps to pre-

[1] M. Ginsberg, op. cit., p. 163.

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POSSESSION OF LAND

In the discussion of the rights to land obtaining in Nupe two facts must be borne in mind. First, the Fulani conquest, which resulted in the appropriation of part of the vacant tribal land; and second, the very low birth-rate and sparse population of the country. These two factors limit each other's effectiveness; moreover, they affect different parts of the country in different measure. We have seen that the appropriation of tribal land took place only in the area east of the Kaduna (Cis-Kaduna).[1] In the area west of the Kaduna (Trans-Kaduna),[2] land-tenure on the traditional tribal or village basis still obtains, and here the population factor shows itself effective in that it eliminates almost all pressure on the land and all more severe competition for landed possession. Owing to the political factors the opposite is true of Cis-Kaduna, and here a complex system of land ownership and land transfer, which in the extreme case amounts to outright purchase for money, reflects the attempts of the people to counteract the pressure on the land. That land disputes are extremely rare in Trans-Kaduna, but very frequent in the 'conquered' territory, is evidence of the same development. One exception may be mentioned at once: the especially valuable marsh-land groves and plots near river-courses, which the Nupe call *bata* (the Hausa *kurmi*). Disputes about this valuable kind of land occur now and again even in the land-rich Trans-Kaduna, and they are fought with special bitterness in Bida and the crowded 'conquered' territory. The following figures may be quoted in support of this statement: in the years 1934 and 1935 24 cases of land litigation came before the *Etsu*'s Court in Bida; 21 referred to Cis-Kaduna and 3 to Trans-Kaduna; of the latter none was a land case in the narrow sense of the word—one was a dispute about trees, and two were disputes over marsh-land plots.

The description of Nupe land-tenure may start most profitably with an enumeration of the various methods by which a man, stranger or native of Nupe, may acquire land or has been able to acquire land in the past. It must be said first of all that under traditional conditions only men can hold or claim possession of land. The dynastic policy of the Nupe kings has first led to women being invested with fiefs and landed property. Mohammedan law, besides, is inclined to confirm land holding by women in their own right. But the holding of land by women is still extremely rare, and limited to Bida and the surrounding districts I have come across one case only—a court case in which sons and brothers of a recently deceased woman contested the inheritance of her landed property. Needless to say, none of the parties concerned were peasants; the land had been acquired first through the channels of clientship, and the present claimants—Bida Mallams—wanted it only in order to sublet it for profit.

To return to traditional land-tenure. For a Nupe man who comes

[1] The territory between Kaduna and Gbako river, i.e. Beni country, and the districts east of the Gbako river, i.e. Bedeggi and Kacha districts.

[2] Trans-Kaduna is the literal translation of the Nupe name for the area: *Lawakpa* (*Lawa* being the Nupe name for the Kaduna river).

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of tax): the owner of oil-palms or locust-bean trees would sell a year's yield of his trees to another person, who in return would pay the tax for him. The issue is still more confused where the transfer of the land with which the trees go appears to be in the nature of a lease for an indefinite period. In this case the original owner or his heirs could claim that the trees, at least, were essentially inalienable, and could be transferred only temporarily, that is, could only have been 'lent' and 'borrowed'. This is itself a compromise, and the attitude of the court in these disputes constitutes a further compromise. In 1934 a farmer had ceded a farm-plot with locust-bean trees on it to another party. After the death of the original owner his heirs reclaimed the trees (though not the land) on the plea that the transfer of the trees could in the nature of things have been meant only as a temporary transfer. The decision of the court was that the new owner should share the crop, fifty-fifty, with the former owners.

Long-term Lease and Purchase

We come now to forms of land-ownership which are typical of Bida and the conquered areas east of the Kaduna and which are almost completely absent in the Trans-Kaduna districts.[1] Among the people of Bida town who derive their livelihood from the land, a few descendants of the original Beni population still own land under tribal conditions, that is, under the conditions described under the heading of village land. Their farms are scattered over the land around Bida—the village land that used to belong to the old, pre-Fulani Bida. But most of this land had been expropriated early in the conquest, under one or other pretext, and the former owners and their descendants had left Bida and moved into the country to other villages or *tunga* settlements, where they found vacant land. Thus of the descendants of the Beni 'town-kings' of Bida only Ndakotsu, the eldest of a number of brothers, had remained in Bida and continued to work the small plots that he had been able to keep; the other brothers had left the town and settled in the country.

Long absence, or the dying out of a family branch, too, gain a totally different aspect here in Bida, as compared with conditions in the village. For the vacated plot is as a rule at once appropriated by one of the big landlords whose lands may surround it, or possibly by one of the three royal houses on whose territory the plot may lie. The latter procedure was, as we shall see, the practice in pre-British times and in the early days of British rule. A somewhat similar case happened during my stay in Bida: a Bida man had returned to the town after a long absence and, claiming his old land, found that it had gone to another man. According to Nupe customary law he had forfeited his right to the land, having been away for such a long period. However, the customary law is not adapted to cope with conditions as they obtain in the town and in 'conquered territory': for here no spare land exists that could be offered to

[1] The exceptions are a few *tunga* settlements which some Bida noblemen have founded outside the 'conquered territory', for example on the Wuya-Kutigi road. There are no *tunga* of this kind west of Kutigi.

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WANTS AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

Let me repeat that all these wants and incentives which are realized in the social *élite* also represent common incentives of the society at large, and of every social stratum, unattainable though they may appear in actuality. They remain 'ideals', and the inability to realize them is regarded as a failure, a shortcoming in the socio-economic system. There exist, however, certain exceptions: instances of that divergence, or rift, in the appreciation of certain wants and incentives which divides town and country. Though few in number, they occur in widely different domains of social life—nutrition, recreation, sex morality.

Certain instances concern the form of a want, the conventionalized taste in which it appears, rather than its essence. I have spoken in an earlier context of the different taste in intoxicants typical of town and country. The Bida people prefer palm-wine to the sorghum-beer which is drunk commonly in the village. Palm-wine is the native drink in the oil-palm countries of Southern Nigeria; we also find it, side by side with sorghum-beer, in certain riverain districts of Nupe where the oil-palm is cultivated. Bida itself imports palm-wine from these districts and the south. The adoption of this, as it were, alien drink by the people of Bida was explained to me as being due to the demands of Islam, which forbids fermented drinks like sorghum-beer, but permits palm-wine—at least in the eyes of the Nupe followers of the Prophet. I do not know how far this vindication of palm-wine will pass muster with Mohammedan scholars. But I think we may accept the negative feature of this interpretation, namely, the condemnation on religious grounds of sorghum-beer, which, as we shall see presently, represents a drink closely associated with pagan religious rites. Or I might quote the instance of the different styles of dance and music appreciated in Bida and in the peasant districts: in the town we find the dance of professional women-dancers who are watched by an appreciative audience; in the village the dance of peasant men and women who are performers and public in one.

In other tastes and wants town and country differ fundamentally. Let me quote two striking examples: the attitude towards sexual licence (about which I need say no more here),[1] and the attitude towards travelling. What I have said above about the appreciation of travelling in the social *élite* of the country could be extended to apply to the whole of Bida. To have travelled widely, to have 'seen the world', helps to establish the social standing of the townsman. The interest in travels even outweighs other, similar, interests. When I was collecting Nupe folk-lore I met with almost complete failure in Bida, although the villages had proved a most fruitful field. And this was the explanation which my Bida informants gave me: 'You must go to the villages to hear folk-tales. We Bida people have forgotten them all. No one wants them now. Why? Because when we tell stories, in the evenings, we like to hear about travels, and about other towns; we listen to the people who

[1] See Chaps. IX, XIX.

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can tell us about Kano, Zaria, or Lagos.' The widespread familiarity with travelling, indeed the love of travelling, which characterizes the Bida people, has no counterpart among the peasants.[1] We have heard that even journeys to another district are rare and of little appeal to the villagers.

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How are we to explain this negative form of culture contact? Why did cultural assimilation stop short of these few traits while so many other incentives and wants are spreading from the capital to the rural districts? When we examined, in a previous chapter, the different sex morality in town and country, we discovered its close functional interrelation with other social facts. Behind the divergent attitude we perceived the effectiveness of political and economic factors. This also points out the answer of the present problem. Sex morality can change only together with those other social determinants. Let me recall the main facts. Negative facts, such as the absence in the village of the 'double morality' of the capital, and also the absence of a large floating population which proved one of the incentives for the creation of semi-professional prostitution in the town. Positive facts, such as the more closely knit village life, which forbids the open and condoned matrimonial laxity characteristic of Bida; the efforts of peasant family heads to provide bride-price for an early marriage of the men, and thus to maintain the labour-unit; the conditions of labour in peasant households which tend to preclude sexual promiscuity among the women. The 'negative' culture contact which we are observing does not, then, represent a failure of assimilation in certain specific domains of culture, but the inertia of a cultural whole which cannot suffer changes in these domains without undergoing far-reaching changes itself.

The same is true of the incentive of travelling. In Bida, travelling serves the political interests of the ruling group; it is helpful to the productive enterprises of the town population; and it follows the political interests converging in the capital of the kingdom. None of these factors exists in the village. On the contrary, productive organization, political and religious life, move in a narrow compass beyond which the community affords no protection or promise of attachment.

In the case of the other, minor, instances of cultural divergence, which refer only to the form which a particular satisfaction takes, one might argue that the essential similarity of the wants themselves must tend to retard a more complete assimilation. But here again we must view the situation under the aspect of the cultural whole and the close integration within the whole even of apparently ephemeral traits. The appreciation of a certain kind of drink or a certain style of dance is indeed built firmly into the framework of village culture. Thus all religious rituals involve a libation of beer. The temptation to replace it with palm-wine would have to break down, not only an existing nutritive habit, but also, partly, the spiritual background against which the people (consciously or unconsciously) must regard their traditional beverage. The alternative solution of admitting palm-wine, and having different drinks for ritual and profane purposes, would involve an equally radical change in other

[1] See p. 39.

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respects: not only in the productive arrangements which, in these circumstances, would no longer supply the ritual beverage as a matter of course, but also in the psychological attitude, which would have to admit a ritual beverage largely emptied of what Radcliffe-Brown calls 'social value', i.e. which would be nothing but a ritual beverage, completely removed from the habits of ordinary life. The village dance, again, is an expression of group co-operation and coactivity in the recreational sphere. Like the traditional occasions themselves on which it is performed—kinship feasts, *egbe* work, religious ceremonies, and so forth—the dance mobilizes and intensifies group sentiments. We might even go so far as to say that the unitary nature of the group which is thus mobilized forbids a division into neutral performer and aloof lookers-on. The correlation between professionalized performance and differentiation within the group is indeed clearly visible in Bida. An aloof aesthetic appreciation of professional dancers and musicians appears to represent the only form of entertainment acceptable to a society in which class prejudices and motives of status and prestige dominate all gatherings and festivities. Class prejudice has fostered a conception of dignity set against public exhibitions of this kind. The explanation is, I believe, that it would obliterate, even though only temporarily, the demarcation of rank and status. It is, in fact, quite inconceivable for a man of status to join in a dance, even in his own house, for example, at a family feast—to dance, that is, together with, and in front of, people who must invariably include persons of lesser station. Yet in the villages old men, even titled elders, commonly join in the dances of the younger folk, without danger to their dignity. To assimilate, then, the village dance to the performances which appeal to the 'sophisticated' people of Bida would mean assimilating the complete social organization.

For the sake of the theoretical argument I have stated the case of this negative form of culture contact a little more strongly than is warranted by actual conditions. Throughout this book we have found evidence of the gradual closing of the rift, and of the advancing assimilation even in these domains of culture. But indeed our argument is supported by this development. For the assimilation does not advance by the narrow channels of confined, specific, cultural changes. Rather these changes are carried by the tide of a far-reaching cultural adjustment which is transforming the whole productive system and the organization of labour as well as the social life at large in the Nupe village. The breaking up of the family labour-unit, and the appearance, in the country, of professional Bida musicians as spokesmen of what I have called the 'propaganda for the kingdom', are two convincing instances.

WEALTH AND STATUS

Hitherto we have been using the terms 'status' and 'prestige' as meaning one and the same thing. It becomes important now to distinguish between them. By 'status' we understand a more or less fixed place on the social ladder; 'prestige' represents a more fluid form of social recognition, gained by certain services or deeds in accordance with the

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APPENDIX V

NOTES ON THE NUPE CALENDAR

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THE calendar of the Nupe peasant is an agricultural calendar. It is based on lunar months, and starts with the first rains, i.e. roughly in April. From the beginning of the rains the people count twelve, thirteen, and sometimes fourteen months until the new rains break. The last month of the old year (i.e. the 13th or 14th month) is then identified with the first month of the new year. The year is divided into six seasons, each comprising two months, as follows:

gbama first rains
zuzūkā rainy season
malikā (cf. the Hausa *marka*)—heavy rains
sabakā time of growth
gbāfere cold season
banagū hot season, or small-pox season.

Frequently, however, the Nupe peasant refers to the different months of the year by their number only, speaking of 'first month', or 'second month', and so on. The name *zuzūkā* is also used to denote the whole rainy season, and the whole dry season is called *yikére*, which means, literally, harvest.

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This calendar is the pre-Islamic, original, Nupe calendar, which is rapidly going out of use, specially in Bida and the larger, semi-Mohammedan, villages, being superseded by a Nupe adaptation of the Mohammedan calendar. The latter, also operating with twelve lunar months, may coincide with the Nupe peasant calendar in the years when the Mohammedan New Year falls in the neighbourhood of April. But when the two do not coincide, and differ by a month or more, the time reckoning of the peasants in the semi-Mohammedan districts is thrown into serious confusion.[1] The Mohammedans, incidentally, unlike the pagan peasants, use the names of the months rather than the numbers. The Nupe-Mohammedan names of the months are as below. It will be seen that the idea of the original Nupe calendar, with its twin months grouped in six seasons, has been preserved in the new nomenclature:

1. *Etswa navū*—month of the torches (so called after the custom of throwing fire-brands during the celebration of the Mohammedan New Year).
2. *Etswa bawa gani*—month preceding the *gani* (a Nupe ceremony).
3. *Etswa gani*—month of the *gani*.
4. *Etswa togaya*—'twin month' (taken over from Hausa).
5. *Etswa togaya guba*—second twin month. These two months are believed to be unlucky, and no important events, such as a wedding or naming-ceremony, will be celebrated during them.
6. *Etswa bawa asū za gbakó*—month preceding the fast of the old men (i.e. first part of Ramadan).

[1] In June 1936, travelling from Kutigi to Jebba, I found that the Mohammedanised people of Kutigi were counting the second month, while the pagan Jebba Islanders maintained that it was the fourth.

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7. *Etswa azū za gbakó*—month of the fast of the old men.
8. *Etswa bawa azū*—month preceding the (general) fast (i.e. Ramadan).
9. *Etswa azū*—month of the (general) fast.
10. *Etswa Salagí*—month of the small 'Sallah' (the first Mohammedan *Id* festival).
11. *Etswa bawa Salakó*—month preceding the great 'Sallah'.
12. *Etswa Salakó*—month of the great 'Sallah' (the second *Id* festival).

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I

THE NUPE CREED

I. PROLEGOMENA

THE title of this book, *Nupe Religion*, suggests a logical unity in our subject-matter which, at the very outset, might appear problematical. Two questions, in particular, might be raised. First, are we in fact dealing with *one* religion of *one* people, that is, with beliefs and practices which both form a coherent system and occur uniformly throughout the society? And second, how far are we dealing with 'religion' in the strict sense of the word, and with it alone, to the exclusion of 'magic', mere 'superstitions', and other, cruder forms of belief?

The answer to the first question cannot be given in the form of a simple 'yes' or 'no'; nor can all the issues involved properly be judged so early in the discussion. Let me, however, anticipate the relevant points. The religious beliefs and practices of the Nupe differ considerably in different parts of the country; we shall frequently meet with local cults and with forms of worship varying from region to region, even from village to village. Furthermore, the main acts of worship, their execution and promises, concern the single village community, and not that widest group, the Nupe people or tribe. Nor indeed is that widest group an unequivocal unit. The people who call themselves Nupe are internally divided in various ways—by ethnic descent, by tribal segmentation and, partly, political allegiance, by the cleavage between urban and peasant population, and by the barriers of social class. The bulk of the Nupe people is held together in the kingdom of that name, and in the following description we shall mainly be concerned with the politically united tribe or nation. Even so, certain of the internal divisions remain, and these, too, entail corresponding divergences in religious belief and practice.

It might seem, therefore, that in speaking of 'Nupe religion' we are merely employing a convenient descriptive phrase, a summary reference of the kind ethnographers find useful when they wish to state that such-and-such observances are found in a particular group or area. But the phrase is intended to mean more than this.

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founder of Nupe kingdom and serving the interests of the state. We shall later deal with these 'exceptions'. Let me here stress that in calling them that I am taking my lead from the people. Indeed, the Nupe would altogether disregard these lapses from a wholly abstract creed, which seems to require no effigies or visible symbols; for when comparing their religion with that of other peoples, the Nupe will always emphasize that they have no sacred emblems, idols, masks, or 'little likenesses' (*zazagĩzi*).

It is perhaps not surprising that so abstract a conception as that of *kuti* should not be held with equal clarity by everyone. In particular, I met with two as it were heterodox notions; one was the idea that *kuti* represents a part of *Sokó*, or a *Sokó tetengi*, a 'Little God' (which, in Nupe language, is a contradiction in terms); according to the other, God was 'up above', but *kuti* was somehow of the earth, being a 'thing' buried in the ground, very likely in the places of ritual. These notions were always put tentatively, and were moreover voiced by individuals who could not claim the fullest knowledge available in the society, that is, by younger men or by Nupe under the influence of Islam; the older men, and especially the priests of *kuti*, declared such views to be false. But supernatural power understood more concretely and associated with specific material objects also has a place in the Nupe universe. This notion is embodied in the third tenet of the religion, which concerns the existence of *cigbe* or 'medicine'.

(iii) *Medicine*

Let me say, first of all, that 'medicine' is the literal translation of the vernacular term, which is applied not only to 'magic' substances but also to medicinal herbs or drugs of any kind, native as well as European, whose properties are assessed essentially empirically. Of the relation between the two we shall speak in a later context. Here we must note that the Nupe inventory of the 'things in the world' does not mention 'medicine', although in some respects it is an exact counterpart to *kuti*, that is, an agency meant to aid man in a universe governed by an all-too-distant deity. But unlike *kuti*, 'medicine' is not thought of as being part of the creation and a primordial gift of God. If it now exists in the world, it does so because of man's own endeavours. There is a legend, well known throughout the country, expounding this view.

"There was a certain younger brother, called Kpara, whose elder brother was Tswasha Malu. They lived in the time of *Etsu* (king) Shagó.[1] There existed a certain medicine, called *cekpyeca shina*

[1] The two brothers are mentioned in no other myth. The name of the king, Shagó, occurs also in the myth describing the origin of the

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787 Shell pattern 2—Some misfortune will befall the family head. Reversed—The family head will acquire greatness.

Shell pattern 3—Smallpox will visit the town in the rainy season, but there will be no deaths.

Shell pattern 4—The diviner will receive gifts. Reversed—Misfortune will threaten everyone, in the whole country.

Shell pattern 5—The women will quarrel. Reversed—Everyone in the country will enjoy good business; the women will have children.

Shell pattern 6—All the men (not the women) of the town will have grounds for distress, for example, because of the death indicated in shell pattern 1.

Shell pattern 7—Trouble on the highway.

Shell pattern 8—All the important people in the town will be happy.

Transposed position

Pattern 1 in house 2—Happy relations between the nobility and the White Man.

Pattern 1 in house 3—Many deaths.

Pattern 1 in house 5—Refers to menstruation.

Pattern 1 in house 7—There will be fights on the road, possibly death or murder.

Pattern 2 in house 1—Rain will fall; or—Happy relations between the nobility and the White Man.

Pattern 2 in house 4—Many deaths.

Pattern 2 in house 7—Pregnancy.

Pattern 3 in house 4—The diviner will receive a gift of a goat or sheep.

Pattern 3 in house 5—The women will quarrel among themselves.

Pattern 3 in house 6—Highway robbery.

Pattern 3 in house 7—War.

Pattern 4 in house 1—Many deaths.

Pattern 7 in any house other than 5—A guest will arrive.

Pattern 7 reversed in any house—A case of death.

Pattern 7 in house 5—Pregnancy.

Pattern 8 in house 1—There will be greetings and gifts for the nobility.

Pattern 8 in house 2—The client should stay at home and not travel.

Pattern 8 in house 3—Success in trade.

184 787 Let me note that different diviners, using a different key series, will also interpret it somewhat differently. Mostly, this merely means that the interpretations are moved about, from one place

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on the list to another, while the list as a whole remains unchanged. Sometimes, however, the lists themselves differ; though these differences are few, they bear relevantly on the social background of the diviner and the interests current in his setting. Thus the diviners in the villages interpret shell pattern 3 as meaning, on occasion, a 'good hunt', which interpretation does not occur at all in the list of the diviners in or near Bida town, where there is no hunting. Again, in the villages shell pattern 8 is sometimes taken to mean 'a council in the house of the chief'; the connection with the 'important people' mentioned in our version is clear; but in that version, coming as it does from the capital where there are no councils of elders or chiefs, the reference to a 'council in the house of the chief' would clearly be out of place. Conversely, shell pattern 1 reversed has in Bida a meaning which hardly affects the life in villages remote from the political difficulties and tensions of the capital; characteristically, in the villages the same pattern reads 'rain will fall', a prophecy which in turn has less importance for the townspeople. In one instance at least—the transposed pattern 2 in 'house' 1—the diviner's key allows for both these interests. I need not point out especially that it allows also for modern conditions and problems of a thoroughly topical kind.

Let me finally quote two examples of complete divinations. The first was performed for a canoe-man who was about to set out on a trip up the river. The cords fell as follows:

Cords	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Shell patterns	6	2 rev.	4	7	3	4	2 rev.	1
Prophecies	The people will foregather	Refers to evening	A pleasant trip	Good trading	The women will pick quarrels	The men will be pleasant	Gifts for the chief	The *kuti* is friendly

The advice to the client was to be of good cheer: he should start out in the evening, take along gifts for the chief, and be careful in his dealings with women; he would return, after a successful trip, in four or five days (which last prophecy was nowhere indicated in the cords). The second divination was concerned with identifying the *kuci* of a boy just born to the client (a man). Here the diviner was interested only in the first two 'houses', the first referring to 'God', the second to 'House', that is, to the client's position of a family head. After several throws the diviner obtained this combination:

Cords	1	2
Shell patterns	4	6

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III

RITUAL

I. PRELIMINARIES

On the grounds of time and occasion the Nupe rituals fall into two sharply distinct groups. On one side we have rituals occupying a regular, fixed place in the calendar of the country; on the other, rituals which, as the Nupe say, 'have no month', that is, whose performance is contingent upon the variable needs of the moment. A few 'fixed' rituals which can also be performed out of season and others which, originally 'fixed', have become 'movable' represent intermediate or transitional forms. But even here the twofold division is not obscured. For in the case of rituals performed both regularly and contingently, the latter performance is clearly marked off as an adaptation to particular circumstances; it is on a much smaller scale and lacks the festive features which accompany the regular ceremony, being as it were only concerned with the business in hand.

Surveying Nupe country as a whole the number of different rituals is strikingly large and their geographical distribution irregular; the chart on p. 69 lists a number of them by name and locality, and also shows their varying times of performance. Only one ritual, *gunnu*, occurs everywhere; others are common to one or two tribal sections only or even to a few villages, where special local conditions appear to justify the special cult. In the extreme case a particular ritual may be restricted to a single village community. We met already with instances, such as the Mokwa ritual of the sacred crocodile, the rituals called *ketsá* and 'Father Niger' in the riverain area, and the worship, once more on the river, of the sacred bronze figures associated with Tsoede. Let me add some further examples: in the kolanut-growing district of Labozhi we find the special cult of an ancestress reputed to have introduced the planting of kolanut; a somewhat similar cult, concerned with the cultivation of the oilpalm, occurs in the village Kutiwengi, in the 'oilpalm belt' to the north; Jebba Island possesses a special ritual, unique in Nupe country, which is meant to ward off smallpox; while Mokwa and a few villages in the neighbourhood practise the similarly unique masked dance *elo*.

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CHART OF NUPE RITUALS

	Month	LOCALITIES—INLAND								LOCALITIES—RIVER			
		Doko	*Sakpe*	*Kutigi*	*Etsu*	*Labozhi*	*Ewugi*	*Wuna*	*Mokwa*	*Jebba*	*Leaba*	*Gbajibo*	*Bele*
'Fixed' Rituals	1(13)	[navũ]	gunnu [navũ]	[navũ]					[navũ]				
	2												
	3			gani	lugba*								
	4												
	5	žiba					gbara		gunnu				
	6	sakó											
	7					gunnu	sara				gunnu	elo	
	8							dakunu			mamma		
	9	žiba					gunnu*	gunnu*	elo	mamma; dzakó; ndá-duma		gunnu	gunnu
	10			[sallagi]		nnakógba			sara; bukpe		ndáduma	mamma	žiba; ndáduma
	11	gunnu	mamma		gunnu			fufobo		gunnu			
	12			[sallakó]									
'Movable' Rituals		Dibo Saba; fitakũ	sara; žikinta	gunnu; žikinta	tídzana	gunnu	dzanavu; žikinta	žicigbã	sara; bukpe	tídzana; žikinta; ketsá; ndáduma	žikinta	sara; žikinta; ndáduma	žikinta

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Note : Names in square brackets indicate Moslem observances (see chap VIII). Rituals marked by a star are performed triennially; as these are isolated cases they are disregarded in the text.

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With so much variety it is impossible to select a particular community whose rituals would be 'typical' of Nupe practice; rather, each village cycle of rituals is typical (or atypical) in its own way. Yet neither is it possible to describe every variety of Nupe ritual (several of which I only knew from hearsay or from informants' reports). What seems more important is to examine some such cycle of rituals within the setting in which it operates, that is, within the corporate life of the community for which it is primarily valid or, in Nupe parlance, by which it is 'owned'.[1] As regards the question, which particular cycle of rituals to select, I propose to resolve it by taking two instances, one from Doko and the other from Jebba Island. This compromise seems the most expedient both since I have actually observed the majority of rituals in these two places and since these represent an interesting contrast, Doko being a 'typical' inland village, with hereditary chieftainship, and Jebba Island a riverain community where chiefs are elected. Let me add that, from other points of view, both communities are also 'atypical'; Jebba, because it is one of the two villages possessing major 'relics' of Tsoede; and Doko, because it formerly belonged to a federation of villages (or 'towns' as the Nupe would say), which type of political organization is unique in Nupe country. As regards the two communities themselves, a full description has been given elsewhere and need not be repeated.[2]

One further point of more general import may be anticipated. In spite of the great variety of local cults the number of rituals performed and their place in the year's cycle do not differ greatly in the different communities. Usually there are one or two movable rituals, rarely more, and two or three fixed rituals, only a few villages having four or five; and though the dates of the fixed rituals vary somewhat from place to place, they fall more frequently in certain months (e.g. the 9th and 11th) than in others (e.g. the 3rd or 5th).[3] The corresponding months in our calendar, incidentally, can only be calculated approximately since the Nupe reckon in lunar months, the year beginning with the onset of the rains, and insert a 13th month every five years. In other years the 1st month is usually also called the 13th, especially when the rains are late, which not infrequently leads to confusion, some localities being temporarily a month out in their reckoning.[4]

[1] I am here using the phrase 'primarily valid' since certain rituals imply an additional, wider validity (or 'ownership') which extends to the whole sub-tribe or even tribe. This point will be examined later (see below, p. 103).

[2] See *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 19, 25, 35. [3] See the chart on p. 69.

[4] In 1934, for example, the 1st month was taken to have begun on March 15th in the eastern part of Nupe, but at the end of April I found that the people of Mokwa, in the west, had just started with their 1st month. For a fuller description of the Nupe calendar, see *A Black Byzantium*, Appendix V.

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substantiate the other 'theory'. Indeed, I suspect that it is mere 796x
'theory'—an attempt to lend neatness and logic to an uncon- 766
vincing and haphazard division.

It should perhaps be added that there is no trace in Jebba of an 616
original ethnic division of the kind which, in other Nupe com- 554
munities, accounts for the divided 'ownership' of particular [184]
rituals. Nor does the situation elsewhere in Nupe furnish any clue. The association of rituals with the funeral ceremonial for elders occurs, so far as I can judge, only in the river valley. But the puzzling dual division does not occur outside Jebba. In Bele, a small village up-river belonging to the same sub-tribe, Gbedegi, the two main local rituals, *gunnu* and *žiba*, are performed together at the death of all elders. In Mokwa, another Gbedegi town, a short distance from the river, the majority of rankholders are given a *gunnu* funeral; at the death of the *Sheshi* (the hereditary 'king-maker') his 'own' ritual is performed, and at the death of the *Ṣamaza* (a non-hereditary rank), the masked ceremonial *elo*, which is in the charge of that elder. In neither case are the two men or their families excluded from the *gunnu*. Thus, as regards the Jebba version of that custom, I can only conclude that it represents an isolated attempt, neither thorough nor ultimately successful, to divide two of the main rituals evenly among the community. And this seems consistent with the general predilection of the Nupe for dichotomous arrangements.

(ii) *Movable Rituals*

A novel characteristic of these rites in Jebba is that they can be 796x
performed also at the request of individuals, even of strangers and non-Nupe, who wish to invoke the powerful 'magic' of the island or have been advised by diviners to do so. Indeed, the movable rituals are meant to benefit a much larger population, that is, all the groups living on the river. The *ketsá* sacrifice, more particularly, has made Jebba Island almost a place of pilgrimage.

The man in charge of the *ketsá* is called *Ndádoro*, 'Father of *doro*' (which is another name for the ritual). A priest in the strict sense of the word, like the *Ndazo*, he also walks about bareheaded and always wears 'ritual' dress. The *Ndádoro* I knew was old and blind, so that his actual duties fell to his son and future successor, though the father would still lend his presence and authority to the ritual performance.

There is a story connected with the origin of the ritual. Once a 796x
disastrous flood of the Niger destroyed all houses and farms and 773
brought famine to the river valley. The *Kuta* at Muregi, the chief of the 'Downstream Kede', had learned from Tsoede how to combat floods and prevent their recurrence. Following this advice, the

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sees nothing tragic, and is meant to meet social demands as much as metaphysical fears. The ceremonial surrounding death differs somewhat in different communities; mostly, these variations are of a minor character (concerning, for example, the precise duties of the grave-diggers), and can be ignored.

The full funeral ceremonial includes a whole series of rituals, beginning with the burial, called *mba*, and spun out over three funerary rites, performed after eight days, forty days, and one hundred and twenty days, and called after these time intervals. Poor families may be unable to perform the last rite, which is altogether absent in the riverain area and in a few pagan inland villages. Several informants maintained that the Hundred-twenty Days' rite was an innovation, though long since established in many parts of the country (both among pagans and Mohammedans), and that it had come to Nupe with Islam. This last assumption is without foundation since the Mohammedan funeral customs include no such observance. Yet it does seem likely from the present distribution of the ritual that it originated in the Mohammedan capital and then spread to the pagan villages. The villagers, of course, show in a great many ways their readiness to imitate the 'superior' way of life in the town; and there need have been no stronger reason for an innovation otherwise congenial to the traditional outlook. But in the town the addition of another funerary feast fits more specifically into the social conditions.

To some extent it merely reflects the greater preoccupation, in the town, with occasions for the display of wealth and status. But there seems to be this also. When discussing the final funerary rite the Nupe always stress that it is 'important for the women' or concerns 'the women especially'; as we shall see, it does in fact bear specifically on the end of widowhood and on the parentage of posthumous children. In the villages which do not perform this rite, these questions are settled, three months after the death, in an informal family council. The last funerary rite thus ceremonializes the same occasion as well as postpones it. Now, this occasion is much more important, the issue being more uncertain, among the townspeople than among the peasants in the villages. Only in the town, among the aristocracy and the wealthier classes, does large-scale polygyny occur, so that the re-marriage of widows becomes a complicated matter; equally, levirate and marriage of the mother's brother's widow which, in the villages, greatly simplify the problem, are disappearing among the Mohammedans of the town. The postponement of the decision by another month would thus seem to be a useful expedient; while the added ceremonial lends moral weight to an occasion grown more critical.

The number as well as the scale of the funerary rites vary with

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The number as well as the scale of the funerary rites vary with [764]
the age, sex, and status of the deceased. The full series is per- 766
formed only for married men; in the case of old men who are not survived by widows the last ritual is omitted. Children, young men who are as yet unmarried, and most women are accorded only the Eight Days; only old women, married or widowed, who hold the position of *nűsako* (the 'Great-old-one') are entitled also to the Forty Days. This position goes to an eldest surviving sister in the oldest generation, and the nature of this qualification, referring as it does to the woman's own descent and not to her status by marriage, is also reflected in the arrangement of the ceremonials; for in the case of widows who returned to their own family after the husband's death (as many do), both rites take place in that house; while if the woman died in her husband's house, the Eight Days is performed there, and the Forty Days in the house of her kin. Differences of age and kinship position also determine the burial proceedings and the choice of the burial place. Old men and family heads, and old women, are buried in their sleeping huts, beneath the floor, and a sacrifice is performed over the grave; everyone else is buried, without special ceremony, in the space between huts or by the compound wall, or perhaps in a disused, roofless hut. At the death of old people, finally, the Eight Days' and Forty Days' rites include (among pagans) drumming, singing, and dancing, while this festive aspect is absent in the case of younger people; for their death makes 'the heart ache', while old people 'have seen the world', and there is no cause for grief.[1]

At the death of chiefs or priests the performance of the particular *kuti* they 'owned' may replace the funerary rites of the Eight Days and Forty Days. Similarly, the hunters will perform their [184] ●
own rituals on these occasions. But the rules differ widely; in some communities, as we know, the *gunnu* is the ritual appropriate to the funeral of chiefs and elders. Whichever solution is adopted, the combination of the funeral ceremonial with a fully-fledged *kuti* once more exemplifies the Nupe view of death as warranting the heaviest ceremonial.

The general rules are further modified when the death has been

[1] The qualification of old age cannot be stated more precisely. Old women who do not also hold the position of *nűsako* are sometimes treated like younger people. And in the case of men one always considers these three things—ripe age; possession of an elder's rank and title; and headship of the family. When these three qualifications coincide, there can be no doubt as to the appropriate ceremonial, burial place, and so forth. When only one or the other applies, there is some latitude, the final decision depending mainly on practical considerations, such as the economic position of the family and the likely number of mourners. Thus the observances appropriate to 'old' people do not always form an unbroken series; a person may, for example, be buried in the sleeping hut, with a sacrifice, but without the subsequent festivities of the Eight Days or Forty Days.

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766 of an abnormal kind. Lepers, we remember, are buried in the bush, by the *Ndazo*; people who die of smallpox are buried in the normal manner, though their body is wrapped in dirty rags instead of a new piece of cloth, and there is no ceremonial or mourning. In most parts of Nupe death by lightning does not affect the ceremonial; but in the north and east, apparently under Gwari influence, such persons are buried by the priests of the *sogba* cult, which flourishes in Gwari country.[1] When a person dies on the farm or in one of the outlying hamlets, the body is taken to the village for burial, and all ceremonies are performed there. A person who dies on a journey or in another part of the country is buried locally, without ceremony, all the rites being performed at his or her home; but if the deceased's kinsfolk are not certain that he has been buried at all (say, in the case of people killed in the war), they will perform a fictitious burial with a shroud representing the body. Criminals who have been executed used to be buried, without rites, by the executioners; but in the case of unconvicted criminals, even if they are known to have been guilty of the most hideous crimes, the usual ceremonial is observed: as moral depravity does not count in the beyond, so it ceases to be important on the threshold.

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764 Let me begin with a few words on the technique of burial. The grave is oblong, square, and shallow, only about two feet below the ground. There are no marks on the grave; on the contrary, the ground is carefully levelled and repaired so that it looks like any other place. If the grave is inside a sleeping hut, the latter remains in use after the burial, the same hut often containing two or three graves of successive inhabitants. The body is placed in the grave lying on its side, 'as though asleep', and, among Mohammedans, facing east. The grave chamber is kept clear of earth by a roof of wooden beams, covered with a white grass mat; the body rests on another mat of the same kind. Among Mohammedans, fresh leaves and boughs are in addition scattered over the floor
764 and roof of the grave chamber.[2] The grave-diggers are called *goro*,
767 and are charged also with preparing the body and performing a first sacrifice over the grave. Their duties, ritual already in their secrecy, are usually hereditary in certain families which hold no other religious function. Among Mohammedans the body is prepared by four male or female relatives, according to the sex of the deceased, and mallams are grave-diggers.

[1] See below, p. 211.

[2] I was told of an older form of burial, in which the grave chamber is dug into the side of a circular shaft five to six feet deep. This practice has now disappeared, though the people of Doko assured me that chiefs would still be buried in this fashion. I have seen burials of this kind only in the neighbouring country of Gwari.

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765 sacrifice, and another big feast takes place, which lasts two days but otherwise duplicates the celebration of the Eight Days.

The widows may now leave the compound and go into the town, though they may do so only at dark, when they cannot be recognized. The prohibition to wash or to change their clothes remains in force for another four months, and not until then may the widows begin to think about re-marriage. The final funerary rite is once more a copy of the previous feasts, save that all present will now [302] wear their best and most festive clothes. The widows especially, if they are still young, will stain their hands and feet with henna and their eyes with antimony, prospective brides even in appearance. For if the question of re-marriage arises, the feast of the Hundred-Twenty Days also serves as an occasion for the family council at which this prospect is discussed and decided. Four months after a man's death, the Nupe argue, a pregnancy for which he was responsible must be noticeable. If so, the widow may not re-marry until the child is born and old enough to be left; the child, called *dzangi*, 'parting-gift child', would then belong to the father's family and stay with it. If the widow is not pregnant at the time (noticeably so, that is), she is free to re-marry, and even if she does not, any child she may subsequently give birth to will be disclaimed by the late husband's family.

764 It now remains to compare the traditional ceremonial with the modern Mohammedan version. The *goro* grave-diggers, as we know, 184 are replaced by mallams, whose work and religious ministrations are surrounded by no secrecy. Nor are these restricted to the death of old people. They now consist in brief prayers, spoken or read in the presence of all the men of the house (women being excluded), both before the body is interred and again before the grave is closed. When the mallams later join the mourners they will continue to murmur prayers, rosary in hand. At the death of an important man, when the grave hut cannot hold all the mourners, the main prayers are said in the roomy entrance hut, and the body will be brought there for the service before being interred. On such occasions mallams of highest standing will officiate, the *Alkali* or *Liman* leading the prayers, and these are interspersed with passages of impromptu praise and eulogy. On such occasions, too, the men among the guests will wear, not the simple dress of mourning, but rich gowns meant to display their rank and position. The mallams are offered food and given a sum of money, only part of which is a payment for their services; the rest is intended as a pious offering, for distribution among all the mallams of the town. It is extremely shameful to give too little, and families will borrow money or pawn their belongings rather than risk dismissing the mallams with a gift that might be considered shabby; so that the

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pious aims are again made a vehicle for ostentation. The gifts of condolence are once more in money and are made, not once only, but two or three times, every guest being expected to give in accordance with wealth and status. Equally, the gifts have changed their name, being now known as *sadaka*, 'pious alms', although like the pagan 'greeting' gifts they are intended as contributions towards the funeral expenditure. The subsequent ceremonials become further occasions for alms giving, now on the part of the hosts; for a portion of the food prepared at these feasts is sent out to the mallams of the town or distributed among the poor.

The three funerary feasts are in fact described as *sadaka*, 'alms', or as *walima*, 'sacred feast'. The latter name seems hardly appropriate, since in the Mohammedan version these rites are almost entirely devoid of sacred or religious features. The sacrifice of beer and the private invocation of the deity have, naturally, disappeared; yet the mallams' prayer, which might have taken their place, is not repeated after the burial service. In other words, there is nothing in the funerary ceremonies that would show them to be 'ceremonies', sacred and not secular events, save the pious distribution of alms. But perhaps there is also less chance of confusing the sacred with a worldly occasion; for the Mohammedan version of the Eight Days and Forty Days does not admit singing and dancing and thus maintains the outward appearance of mourning. Only the last ceremonial includes 'merry-making' and finally discards the show of grief.

The Mohammedan funeral ceremonial clearly represents something like a compromise between traditional Nupe practice and the orthodox requirements of Islam; and like most compromises it led to unintended results. To begin with, the contrast between youth and old age has been minimized; for while traditionally only the old were buried with special religious offices (the *goro* sacrifice) and mourned in the early stages with singing and dancing, the former (in the form of the mallam's prayer) are now generally applied, and the latter are altogether omitted. Moreover, there has been a certain loss of mystic appeal and of emotional weight; for the secrecy which traditionally surrounds the burial has been allowed to disappear; and in the subsequent ceremonials the religious appeal is sustained, no longer by an esoteric sacrifice and invocation, but merely by the exercise of charity. If I considered both results to be unintentional and accidental I did so for these reasons. If we took the first result to be a planful adjustment to changed conditions, then we should have to assume that the distinction between youth and old age has been made less sharp because it ceased to be important; yet it has lost none of its

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relevance in Nupe social life.[1] And we should have to assume further, to account for the loss of mystic appeal, that Islam has radically altered the Nupe view of life and death; which, as we shall see, is once more untrue.

5. SOLEMNIZATIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

There is no need to point to the close affinity of the ceremonials surrounding birth, marriage, and death, with the rituals of more general religious bearing. Both operate with the same elements—private (or esoteric) invocations, libations, communal meals, and public 'merry-making' in the concluding phase. Both, too, conspicuously involve numerical calculations defining the occasion and sequence of rites. The congregations, of course, differ, though there is some overlap; for certain *kuti*, like the solemnizations, mobilize the kin group only, while at the funerary rites of men of standing all the dignitaries of the community will be represented. Like the *kuti*, finally, the ceremonials surrounding the crises of life have their implicit as well as their professed aims. The latter could not be 'professed' more clearly. The *suna* is there to name the infant in solemn fashion, and hence to assign to it its future place in the society while at the same time invoking divine protection; the wedding ceremonial sanctifies the union of man and wife and holds out the promise of progeny; and the funeral ceremonial disposes of the dead while one prays that there may be no further deaths; it imposes mourning as well as cancels it, and thus repeats or dramatizes, in the ritual sequence, the endless cycle of human existence. We have, I think rightly, called these rituals solemnizations; for they hallow all these events through relating them with the supernatural. But they do more. Through the form they take, that is, through the manner in which the rituals mobilize their particular congregations, they also express the principles and values governing the structure of the society. Think of the rules assigned to the father and grandfather in the ceremonial of birth, the former being expected to collect the 'medicines' needed for an easy confinement and to consult the diviner, the latter to announce the new-born's name. Or think of the complicated exchange of gifts which concludes the marriage ceremonial, of the double sacrifice in the bride's and the bridegroom's house, and of the selection of the bridegroom's envoys and the bride's companions. The funerary rites throw into relief both the social distinctions that go with sex,

[1] I am here referring to status in the society at large, i.e. to the access to rank and office open only to older men and to the respect they generally command, not to the kinship authority of family heads; the latter has indeed been weakened (see pp. 83, 251.)

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Most of these medicines, then, are 'multifarious', combining a therapeutic with a mystical or 'magical' efficacy. The latter may even be paramount and take an extreme form, as in the medicines efficacious by their mere presence and of unknown composition. Equally, these medicines are treated as 'magical'. They may only be prepared in certain months and not in others, unlike all other medicines; and while the latter are kept in the usual household containers, gourds or ordinary pots, the hereditary medicines are preserved in special earthen vessels, placed apart and decorated in the manner of sacred objects, with a strip of white cloth, a ring of palm-fronds or a crown of white chicken feathers. They all have mystically obscure names and more or less elaborate *emisa*, and some also involve regular sacrifices, either when the *cigbe* is newly prepared or on the occasion of the usual kinship rites and invocations of ancestoral *kuci*. Finally, all these medicines are extremely secret and never sold for money, if indeed they are disposed of at all; if so, they may be given away only to close relations or perhaps friends, as a free gift 'for the sake of God'. Nor is their recipe (even if it is known) ever taught to others.

The special position of the hereditary *cigbe* is reflected in the nomenclature, for these medicines alone merit the epithet 'great', while all other medicines are called 'little'. Let us note that the verbal distinction refers, not so much to the miraculous effects with which the *cigbe* is credited, as to the procedure it sets in motion; for even a 'great' medicine may only cure headache or stomach trouble, at least with part of its efficacy. But the 'great' medicine alone involves proper acts of worship; and as it is bound up with the identity of kin groups through being hereditary, so it serves as a focus of kinship life, affording its supernatural aid primarily or even exclusively to the group to which it belongs and mobilizing it in the fashion of kinship rituals. The 'greatness' of the *cigbe*, then, lies in its social implications rather than in its concrete efficacy. Let us note also that its very 'ownership' is far from concrete. For the *cigbe* whose composition is unknown is also never examined, being renewed only from the beer and blood of the sacrifice. What is truly 'owned', is not any tangible, physical substance but only the vessel in which it is supposed to exist; so that this becomes a shrine for religious ministrations indistinguisable from ritual proper.

3. THE FAITH IN MEDICINE

The distinction between 'great' and 'little' medicines is drawn only by the practitioners and 'owners' of *cigbe*. The bulk of the people know little about these implications, and so grade the

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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755 medicines differently. For them, medicines are simply either easily
184 procured or not, available to the 'public' or monopolized, by families or perhaps communities. And they conclude, equally simply, that the more secret and private a medicine, the more powerful it must be. Experts and public, we may say, speak different languages. And here certain other discrepancies also arise. There are a great many stories current about extremely powerful (and extremely secret) medicines 'owned' and rarely if ever disposed of by certain villages, families or occupational groups (blacksmiths, hunters). When you know the 'owners' you will usually discover either that they credit the medicine with far less impressive powers or that it is by no means as secret as the public believes, or even that the medicine in question does not exist. Again, the people generally are convinced that certain very 'private' and miraculous medicines can yet be acquired at exorbitant prices: in reality, the medicines so described may not be for sale or, once more, may not exist. The public is also impressed or swayed by certain clever tricks which the experts perform with the ingredients of medicine in order to astonish the layman and advertise their skill but which they never regard as a true part of their craft. Thus a certain medicine for headache and stomach pains can be shown to extinguish flames or, more wonderful still, to make hands and feet insensible to burns; a piece of ironwood used in a very secret anti-witchcraft medicine can be shown miraculously to sink in water. But the Nupe expert rarely resorts to this method of self-advertisement; rather, he strongly insists on the difference between *cigbe* and *enya mã*, mere 'conjuring tricks', such as the Hausã charm peddlers and 'magicians' are fond of performing. Nor does he ever offer 'fakes', of this or any other kind, for the 'real thing' or show any cynicism regarding the value of his products. He believes in them as much as do his clients; and if their trust shows in the eagerness and awe with which they approach the expert, his seriousness and scrupulous attention to detail leave no doubt as to his good faith.

755 The question arises, what concrete proof the believers can have of the efficacy of the more fantastic and 'magical' medicines. In the case of the therapeutic remedies there exists, as I suggested, at least the possibility of some apparent if spurious empirical support; also their efficacy is understood to be in some measure uncertain and subject to the will of God. But no amount of belief in those medicines which turn a man into a miraculously successful farmer or make him invulnerable and invisible can conjure up the desired proof. The confidence inspired by their possession may indeed make the owner a keener farmer or a more courageous soldier and hunter; but though fortune may favour the brave it

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in this or other female professions; all these things I found in fact to be true of the *Sagis* I met. And I would conclude further, that the position of leadership among the women who practise a trade or profession is apt to be identified with power of witchcraft, as the whole market organization of the women is in a sense identified with the fantasy organization of witches. So that the economic independence of women, which is so largely a moral independence as well, seems to furnish the logical basis for the ascription of witchcraft. Let me break off at this point, which we shall reach again by a different route.

2. MALE AND FEMALE WITCHES

The Nupe text from which we started requires a final correction. Its summary assumption that only women are witches is somewhat inexact. Women alone are *evil* witches, who would desire to do all the things that witches are supposed to do; but there exist also male witches, who are in some measure their partners in crime. They are odd partners: they do not work evil themselves; they do not go out on the nightly search for human victims; on the contrary, the male witches are said to be 'good' people, who would curb the evil desires of the women. Yet precisely the most sinister effect of witchcraft, the killing of the victim (as against merely weakening his health), is thought to depend on the co-operation of both sexes.

We note the exact parallel to the two fatal 'diseases of God', leprosy and sleeping sickness. There, too, the two sexes appear as the two components of the supernatural threat, which is less grave if one alone is involved, and deadly only when the two are combined; and there, too, the female agent plays the decisive part. In the sphere of witchcraft, that part stands for the active evil will; while the role of the male agent is merely permissive or perhaps negative, that is, consists in *not* willing that the evil intentions be frustrated.

Thus far all Nupe are agreed. But on all other details concerning the alleged partnership of men and women opinions are once more divided. Only in Beni country and around Kutigi are the male witches called by a special name, *eshe*; elsewhere one uses *gaci*, and specifies the sex if necessary. If this is not done, the word is taken to refer to women. Most people hold that the male witches are much fewer in number than the female ones; thus it is thought that all the witches in a village, or seven, or three, share one male helper. They would visit him at night to solicit his help; but while some think that it is only the *fifingi* of man and woman who meet in this fashion, others are certain that it is the real persons who do

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change in this array does not alter the continued consciousness of identity, but is subsumed in it.

This is, of course, a familiar situation, which ultimately accounts for the continuity (or continued self-awareness) of societies even when their cultural possessions, or for that matter their populations, change. Much will depend on the gradualness and restricted scope of the change; a sudden change in which new modes of behaviour greatly outweigh the 'array' of pre-existing ones may disrupt the continued identity. But it need not always do so. For the process just outlined may also be reversed: the society facing such far-reaching changes may yet fasten on to some particular cultural possession which remained unchanged, and consider it sufficiently relevant to furnish a criterion or symbol of the continued identity. Often, as we know, a creed or some religious observance preserved amidst the changes will prove to have this relevance.

This process, too, can be observed among the Nupe, among the colony of emigrants in Lagos, who have lost nearly every feature of culture, including language, which would normally sustain that awareness of 'being Nupe' or 'still being Nupe'. But they have preserved one traditional cult, the *gunnu*; and they still regard themselves as Nupe (calling themselves either Nupe or, more often, Takpa or Tapa, by the Yoruba name). The two things go together; in discussions, when the people wish to emphasize their tribal identity, they at once mention the possession of this cult which, to them, seems decisive.

Let me say a few words about the Nupe colony in Lagos. It numbers perhaps 5,000 people, both scattered over the outlying hamlets and villages and occupying a special quarter in the city of Lagos.[1] The Nupe settlement is claimed to be of considerable antiquity, going back to the Portuguese era, and to have attained its present important and honoured position towards the end of the last century, when the self-made head of the Lagos Nupe, a certain Gana and a 'noted warrior', was elevated to high rank by the Yoruba town king. This Gana, who incidentally was taken to England to be presented to Queen Victoria, was the grandfather of the present chief of the Lagos Nupe, a man of about seventy. Gana's rank, *Osode*, is still held by his descendants, and with the rank goes the priestship of the *gunnu*, which Gana had somehow assumed. The Lagos *gunnu* is a combination of three rites all subsumed under the same name, the *gunnu* itself, the *ndakó gboyá*, and the ritual of the Chain of Tsoede, the paraphernalia of the three

[1] The Nupe quarter in Lagos is known to everyone; its main thoroughfares are called *Tapa Street* and *Osode Street*, the latter deriving its name from the title held by the head of the Nupe colony (see below).

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY

General

105 Most of the Nupe participate in a complex exchange-economy. Before the introduction of British money, cowrie shells were used as currency and are still used at funerals, and in reckoning marriage and other traditional payments.

The trans-Kaduna area and the country north of Bida (e.g., in Lemu), where land is fertile and plentiful, is the most prosperous. Wealth is greater where the household has a large labour unit or where a craft is practised in addition to farm work. Bida town exhibits greater extremes of poverty and wealth than the rest of the country but outstanding differences are not between individuals, but between groups, for example, urban and rural populations. It is said to be unusual to see badly-clothed men, women, or children, and under-nourishment is rare.

The traditional political offices are no longer inseparably linked with wealth, though high social status still attaches to them. Members of the *élite* can maintain their prestige fairly cheaply, as symbols of status (glazed turban or silver sword) are either heirlooms or not costly; the inherited house shows status even if in disrepair; polygyny is facilitated by the low marriage payment for "marriage in the family";[1] travelling can be sustained by claiming hospitality from relatives.[2]

Agriculture[3]

241 Nupe farming shows considerable technical knowledge and little magic or ritual is associated with it. Shifting cultivation is practised but plots are worked for 3–4 years (Doko), 4–5 years (Mokwa), and 6–7 years (Kutigi) before they are allowed to lie fallow for from 4 to 15 years. Rotation of crops is not generally practised, though Line reported it from the area round Jima, where three years of groundnuts were followed by two of guinea-corn. Intercropping is practised and two or three crops are often grown together. The size of a plot worked by one man is usually 2–2½ acres.

A large heavy hoe (*zuku*) is used for throwing up mounds and ridges, and a small hoe (*dugba*) for weeding and lighter work. A long bush knife (*gada*), nowadays of European manufacture, is used for cutting grain stalks and digging out yams.

Farms are cleared and burnt during the dry season. First-year cultivation after clearing is in mounds; those made for yams are 2–3 ft. high, 4–5 ft. apart, and in rows 6 ft. apart. Subsequent cultivation is in ridges 1 ft. high and 3 ft. apart. Groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and some vegetables are planted in this way. Marsh cultivation is carried out in small areas of 4–6 parallel ridges. Around Doko (Beni sub-tribe) manure is obtained from the cattle of nomad Fulani, who are invited to camp on fallow plots during the dry season.

184 241 In the area west of the Kaduna River the chief cash crop is groundnuts, and cotton also grows well there. The staple food crops are millet, sorghum, yams, and, to a lesser extent, rice. Cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes are less important. The most profitable commercial crops are rice, groundnuts, cotton, and shea-nut. There is a poorer range of crops round Bida town owing to the scarcity of land; fewer yams are grown there than elsewhere and there is no bulrush millet.

In the Nupe areas of Ilorin Emirate yams are not regarded as a Nupe crop but close contact with Yoruba farmers is said to have improved the Nupe methods of cultivation. In Share[4] each farmer has two farms, one for grain and the other for

[1] See below, p. 48.
[2] Nadel, 1942, pp. 339–85; Line, 1947.
[3] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–14, 237–8; Line, 1947.
[4] Anon. 1934–6.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

184 yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa[5] yams and
241 guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),[6] and guinea-corn was the staple.

241 Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.[7]

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.[8]

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.[9]

251 Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in homestead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

242 The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937–40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulls, and employed two labourers.[10]

245 The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have
[439] their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows
249 near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally
[434 cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and
386] women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

[5] Davies, 1920.
[6] 1917.
[7] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–7.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[10] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

hand, are hardly larger than a *tunga* (see below). An *ezi* used to be encircled by a large wall, the ruins of which can still be seen in many places, which formed a protection from the dangers of war. Some Nupe villages of to-day have sprung from the amalgamation of smaller groups, fusing for purposes of protection against Fulani raiders.

To-day there is at least one small mosque in every Nupe settlement except in the riverain villages, while pagan shrines are concealed in the houses. All settlements have good wells and round roasting-ovens of red clay. A square of open booths forms the market. To the west of every village is an open space (*finzo*) where corn is threshed.

An *ezi* usually has several *tunga* settlements or hamlets; Kutigi, for example, has six, founded between 1860 and 1910. The *tunga* are much smaller "daughter settlements" or "colonies" of the *ezi*. They seldom consist of more than three family groups (*emi*—see p. 31 above); they are less permanent than the "real" village, and lack the religious and ancestral bonds which tie a village to its locality. They have no separate markets or age-sets. *Tunga* settlements have been formed by groups moving out into the bush in search of new farmland; they are always referred to as the *tunga* of a certain *ezi* and rarely, if ever, develop into villages themselves. Close contact, intermarriage, and new emigration link a *tunga* with its *ezi*.

The ward (*efu*) is a sector of a large village or town and is made up of a number of compounds; except in some riverside villages they are often separated from each other by stretches of open land or cultivated fields studded with clumps of trees. Each *efu* has its own name, derived from a topographical peculiarity or a sociological feature, or from the origin of the inhabitants. The number of *efu* in an *ezi* varies; the old city of Bida had four, Doko has five.

The walled compound or "house" (*emi*), already mentioned with reference to its occupants, consists of a number of huts, mostly round, with very thin walls of clay and grass-thatched roofs. The high mud wall surrounding the *emi* opens upon a path or open space where there is a gateway or entrance hall to the compound, consisting of a larger hut known as *katamba*. The *katamba* is used as a meeting place for the men, as a guest house for strangers, or for the carrying out of part-time industries such as mat- or net-making. Within the *emi* are smaller partitions and a number of smaller *katamba* invisible from the outside. A chief sometimes has a larger and more imposing *katamba* with a high gabled roof and windows. Huts and entrance hall are often decorated with ornaments worked in relief into the clay. Signs of occupational specialization, such as a blacksmith's furnace, are sometimes found. A man and each of his wives has a separate hut.

Granaries (*edo*) which stand among the living-huts in the compound, are egg-shaped, raised off the ground, about 7 ft. high and 4 ft. in diameter, with thick clay walls and a grass roof. The opening is about halfway up one side and has a clay lid. There are also cylindrical ovens, 5 ft. high and 3 ft. wide, for drying bulrush millet and shea-nuts, and for making soap, outside the compound. These are communal property, owned by the women.

The Political System[3]

The political organization of the Nupe is centralized under the *Etsu* Nupe, who is the highest title-holder in a nobility graded by precedence but within which there is provision for promotion. Little is known of the system of kingship in pre-Fulani times, though some features from the ancient Nupe system doubtless survive in the original Nupe dynasty at Patigi. In former times there were ritual taboos in conformity with which the *Etsu* wore only white, ate food prepared only by his wives, and might not be seen eating by any stranger. The *ndakó gboyá* cult[4] for

[3] Nadel, 1942, pp. 87–91.
[4] See below, pp. 48–9.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

623 The full council of elders is summoned only on important occasions. The normal routine of village government is carried on by an inner council, consisting of two or three elders of the highest rank who meet informally at the village head's house.

Succession to the highest titles may, like the headship, be either hereditary or by promotion; but succession to the lower titles is nearly always hereditary.[34]

The Political System of the Kyedye

634 The government of the Kyedye sub-tribe is centralized from Muregi and is the 184 monopoly of a selected and privileged body consisting of the Kyedye chief (*Kuta*, also called *Etsu Nya Nuwa*, "the king of the water") and his titled councillors. The *Kuta* has always been subordinate to the *Etsu* Nupe, but, although the district is now administered centrally from Bida in the same way as other districts in the Emirate, no attempt has ever been made to displace the hereditary rulers.

The office of *Kuta* is hereditary in two of the three chiefly lineages, these two being the "founders" and claiming a common ancestor. The rules of succession are not rigid, however, since the wishes of the *Etsu* Nupe, the title-holders, and the people, and administrative ability are also considered. The *Kuta* appears in public with impressive ceremonial and travels in a state canoe which must never be entered by a woman and must never touch the bank. His authority derives from the tradition that the first *Kuta* was invested by Tsoede, his strong economic position, and the fact that most of the important political offices are allotted to his kinsmen. The heir-apparent is known as the *Egba*; the post is held by the most senior of the *Kuta*'s relatives.

The offices of state fall into two categories: first the *ticiši*, title-holders and councillors, with five offices, four of them hereditary; second the *egbaži*, who are delegates in charge of settlements and colonies. There are many grades of *egbaži*, following a strict system of precedence and promotion. Succession in most cases is not automatic but goes to the most suitable candidate of sufficient seniority. In the early days, three title-holders acted as the *Kuta*'s district heads. Each was allotted a section of the river and was formerly allowed to levy tolls on river traffic. To-day these title-holders have no executive power, though they are still accorded respect, and village heads deal directly through the *Kuta*. There are also "household" titles, mainly in Muregi town, bestowed by the *Kuta* upon his followers.

The *Kuta* had at one time a council of state with advisors, though in effect he was an absolute ruler responsible only to the *Etsu* Nupe. In 1945 a district council was formed, consisting of the *Kuta*, *Alkalin* Muregi, village head Muregi, *Tsado Kuta*, *Liman Kuta*, district scribe, and Muregi school mallam. Meetings are not held regularly, but only when matters of importance need to be discussed.[35]

Organization of Kutigi town (Beni sub-tribe)

655 Kutigi town comprises four originally independent groups: the *Kintsóži*, "owners of the country," the original inhabitants under their head (*Ižitsu*) who was formerly town chief; the *Ndaceži* (hunters), aboriginal Nupe but from another village; the *Kónu* (prisoners of war), freed slaves of Yoruba (Yagba) origin, occupied in weaving and indigo-dyeing; *Benú*, the largest group, providing the tribal name, but of alien origin, having arrived in the country from Bornu about 1800. The *Benú* gained political supremacy over the other sections and became the recognized rulers of Kutigi and the neighbouring villages. They are Moslems, wealthy traders and owners of horses and cattle.[36]

[34] Nadel, 1942, pp. 50–8.
[35] Nadel, 1942, pp. 24–5; 1940a, pp. 174–81; Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[36] Nadel, 1936.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

MARRIAGE

582 Marriage among the aristocracy is largely endogamous, i.e., within the ruling
565 class, this " family marriage " as the Nupe call it being characterized by a much lower marriage payment than exogamous marriage. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are encouraged by Moslem custom, though the former is contrary to the traditional marriage rules, so that the scope of " family marriage " is considerably widened. The practice of polygyny, and the fact that the number of wives indicates wealth and status, leads men of wealth and position to marry outside their social group. In order to keep within the Moslem law of four wives only, further wives are relegated to the position of concubines. Ageing wives of the nobility are divorced and replaced by younger girls.[5]

584 According to Temple,[6] betrothal may be as early as 5–7 years for a girl and 10–12 for a boy, but this is not usual. The marriageable age for girls is usually 16–17, but may be as late as 20. Some of the wealthy Bida families marry off their sons very young to enhance their own prestige.[7]

583 Provision of the marriage payment (*ewó yawó*, " money of marriage ") devolves on the head of the family section which is united in the labour unit (*efakó*).[8] It is made up of a series of payments of varying amounts, each of which has a special name. These are: " greeting," " small thanks," " great thanks," " money for henna," and " money for pots," as well as gifts to the bridesmaids and small annual presents of food to the girl's parents. The payments are usually spread over a period of three to five years. They are now valued as a total sum in money which has fluctuated considerably. In pre-British times it was about £3, but later rose to as high as £20, until, in 1934, the Administration intervened and fixed the upper limit at £7. It is becoming customary for the family head to provide the marriage payment only for the eldest son, younger sons having to contribute part of their own, or even bear the whole cost. It is usual for the bride's father to provide her with a dowry, generally consisting of gifts in kind.[9]

● [184] Among the Dibo sub-tribe, according to Temple,[10] girls may be betrothed before birth. The marriage payment is high, but may be paid in farm work. The suitor may, however, be outbid by another and his presents returned before the consummation of the marriage.

588 A form of " woman marriage," similar to that practised by the Yoruba of Kabba Province, is recorded by Temple for the Nupe of Gurara District (Lapai Emirate). Here a rich woman goes through a form of marriage with a girl and allows men to have access to her. Any children born belong to the female " husband."[11]

585 The wedding ceremonial occupies a period of 12 days, divided into three phases of four days each. It begins when the bride, assisted by her young female companions, puts on her dress and veil and receives visitors in her house, the climax being reached on the fourth day when professional musicians and drummers are hired and the bride's father offers food and drink to the guests. Among these will be two envoys of the bridegroom, who will be present at a sacrifice offered by the bride's father to ensure a prosperous marriage blessed with children. Among Moslems a mallam makes a public announcement of the marriage at this stage, which legally establishes the bond. In pagan families, however, the bride is taken to her new home by the bridegroom's envoys, where she is received by her parents-in-law and taken to her newly painted sleeping-hut. The next morning the bridegroom's father performs a sacrifice at which the bride's mother's brother is present,

[5] Nadel, 1942, p. 150.
[6] Temple, 1919, p. 322.
[7] Nadel knew of two such cases where the husbands were still pupils at the Government school.
[8] See above, p. 26.
[9] Nadel, 1942, p. 51.
[10] Temple, 1919, p. 114.
[11] Ibid., p. 324.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

585 and after this festivities begin, ending on the ninth day with the segregation of the bride. The last ceremony, on the 12th day, consists of a ritual meal of a cock and hen by the bride and bridegroom and their close relatives, after which the marriage may be consummated.[12]

Divorce

586 According to Temple[13] a woman may divorce her husband if he has been convicted of crime, if he fails to maintain her, or deserts her for three years. A man may divorce his wife for adultery but seldom does so, since, as Nadel points out, the economic dependence of many husbands on their wives discourages them from [558 seeking a divorce on these grounds. They also feel that it involves a loss of prestige 837] to appear in the rôle of a wronged husband. Adultery is, indeed, widespread among women of every status, particularly in Bida.[14]

Burial

764 According to the traditional ceremonial, burial (*mba*) takes place as soon as possible after death and at any time of day when there is enough light to see by. The grave-diggers (*goro*), who also prepare the body for burial, are sent for immediately death has taken place. The age and kinship position of the deceased determines the place of burial, old men and women, and family heads, being buried under the floor of their sleeping-huts, with a sacrifice performed (by the *goro*) over the grave. Others are buried without ceremony in the space between the huts, by the compound wall, or in a disused, roofless hut. People dying of smallpox are buried in the normal way, except that the body is wrapped in old rags instead of a new [766] cloth. Lepers are buried in the bush. The grave is oblong and shallow, only about 2 ft. below the ground, with a roof of wooden beams covered by a white grass mat, to keep the earth off the corpse. The body is placed on a similar mat, lying on its side, Moslems facing east. A grave is not marked in any way, the earth being carefully levelled, indeed, if burial has been in a sleeping-hut, the hut continues to be used.

765 At the death of chiefs or priests any particular ritual " owned " by them is performed. The full funeral ceremonies consist of three rituals, carried out after 8, 40, and 120 days, bearing the names of these time intervals. The full series is performed only for married men; old men, without surviving widows, do not have the last ritual. In general, children, unmarried young men, and women have only the " eight days."

Mourning must be kept up for eight days, during which relatives of the deceased must not wash, dress their hair, or change their clothes, but men observe this rule for only four days so that they may make preparations for the " eight days " feast. Widows observe mourning until four months after the " eight days " and may not think of re-marriage until then.

764 In Moslem funerals, the *goro* grave-diggers are replaced by mallams, who speak or read prayers in the presence of the men of the house, both before the body is ● 184 buried and again before the grave is finally closed. The mallams are offered food and money, in payment for their services and as a " pious offering " to be distributed among the other mallams of the town. The subsequent ceremonials have also been made occasions for alms-giving.[15]

[12] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 19–21.
[13] Temple, 1919, pp. 321–2.
[14] Nadel, 1942, pp. 152–3.
[15] Nadel, 1954a, pp. 121–30.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

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an outfit for their daughter, pots and pans, mats, etc. A rich man gives something under £4, and spends perhaps as much as £9 or £10 on cloths. If he is unable to raise all this money at once an arrangement can be made in the Alkali's Court, by which he is bound over to make up the deficit within a given time, and so long always as he gives his wife 1,250 cowries, value 6d., for her first chop money, they may marry at once.

The dowry is sometimes remitted in cases where the father-in-law can afford to support the young couple, or a man may marry his first cousin without payment. Where no dower is given the marriage is known as "salaka."

Girls do not marry as a rule before they are sixteen or seventeen and often not till they are twenty, men when they are eighteen or twenty, or later, according to their wealth. The customs of the aboriginal pagan Nupe* differ slightly. The betrothal being arranged by the heads of the respective families, and when it is agreed upon, the boy's guardian assembles the whole family and names the bride in their presence and in that of the prospective groom. All presents are given through the guardian, whom the suitor accompanies on his visits to the bride's people, but he does not see the bride herself. A week before the marriage is consummated both parties remain in their houses, the groom to receive the salutations of his friends, the bride to stain her hands and feet with henna, and to powder her face and body with camwood. On the wedding day the suitor's friends escort him to the hut of his betrothed, where they talk, but she sits silent until the groom gives her presents, which is a signal for the departure of his friends. When the groom emerges he proclaims whether or not he has found his bride chaste. A feast follows, and the groom is escorted back to his house by his friends, where he is followed later by his bride, who is attended by women carrying her outfit. The couple live together in one hut until she conceives, when her husband builds himself another house.

The wedding festivities for a virgin are carried on for a week, day and night. For the first three days they take place in her own people's house, and on the fourth day she goes to her husband's house, where the feasting continues for another four days and four nights. Seven days of seclusion follow, when neither man nor wife may be seen, and after this he is allowed the full honours of a husband. The bride, however, may not go out till three months have elapsed.

The ceremony is of a very much humbler description for a second marriage.

In the Gurara District of Nupe (Lapai Emirate), a curious custom exists, which, with minor modifications is practised

* Sapke and Mokwa. The differences only have been mentioned, not the similarities.

875 sometimes consult a book before speaking; if it concerns anyone
787 who is absent and unknown to the Mallam, the questioner lays his hand on the ground, at which the Mallam gazes.

In the case of illness the Is-sabi is consulted, as if death is certain it would be mere waste to spend money on doctors and on medicine, as is otherwise done.

759 Some doctors have acquired great reputations, and people travel long distances to consult them. As they are not paid unless they effect a cure, they will not undertake hopeless cases.

764 When a man dies he is buried in the compound in a rectangular-
766 shaped grave, which has three depths, one within the other. The body, which is wrapped in a large new cloth, is laid on a mat on one side in the deepest part, the centre, facing eastwards; wood is placed over it to prevent the earth touching the corpse.
[554] Some of the more important men have a special burial-room in their compound, but with this exception it is the same for men, women, and children. Those who die of small-pox or who commit suicide are, however, taken out and thrown into the bush by dogarai, for no one else will touch them. If a body is being carried home it may never be laid down, so a large number
● [184] of bearers are provided to relieve one another. The pagan Nupe pour beer upon the grave, and offer prayers to the spirits.*

765 For seven days after a death the brothers, sons, daughters, and other near relations and friends, come and sit with the bereaved principal from six in the morning till six in the evening. Dirty white clothes constitute mourning apparel, and this is worn for children, parents and spouse.

765 A widower may go out after seven days and work a little,
768 but not much till forty days have elapsed, when he may resume his ordinary habits, though he continues to wear white for five months. Widows, however, remain shut up in the compound for five months, during which time they may not dress their hair, or remove their sandals, or see any man. This over they remarry, and can exercise their own choice as to a groom, being allowed forty days within which to make their arrangements. By the end of this time the law of the country insists on marriage, an old woman getting an old husband, for no one will bury an unmarried woman and, of course, she has no home where she has a right to lie. It is a terror to the widows during their enforced five months of singleness lest they may fall ill or die, for even sickness, following so hard on the tragedy of death, would be considered a sign of evil, and possibly witchdom, so the woman would find difficulty in securing another husband.

768 The heirs are responsible for all debts incurred by the deceased, whose property is divided between his eldest son, his other

* Sapke and Mokwa.

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THE KEDE: A RIVERAIN STATE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

By S. F. NADEL

I. Introduction

THE Kyedye or Kede,[1] with whom this paper is concerned, are a section of the large Nupe tribe of Northern Nigeria, whose general culture and social organization I have described elsewhere.[2] The Kede have many cultural traits in common with their mother tribe; their kinship system is the same; they speak the dialect which is spoken to-day by the majority of the Nupe sub-tribes and has become the acknowledged language of the Emirate, Nupe 'proper'; they have also adopted the religion of Nupe kingdom, Islam. Yet combined with this cultural affinity we find certain marked divergencies. The Kede are a riverain group—the only purely riverain group among the various Nupe sub-tribes. Their economic pursuits and general social life centre round the river on which they live and from which they derive their livelihood. This means already that their social and cultural life must present certain features which are absent in Greater Nupe. Their political organization, moreover, contains certain distinctive and unusual traits—unusual even for Africa at large. It is for this unusual nature rather than for its relation to practical problems of African administration that I have chosen the political organization of this small Nigerian sub-tribe for the subject of this contribution.

II. Demography

The main body of the Kede lives to-day on the Rivers Niger and Kaduna between 8° 30′ and 9° 40′ North Latitude, inhabiting a narrow strip of land on both banks. The Kede share their territory with a number of other tribal sections of the Nupe, which lead a semi-riverain life, pursuing—unlike the Kede—agriculture

[1] The proper Nupe name is Kyedye. But the Hausa, Yoruba, and other neighbouring groups (as well as, to-day, Government officials) prefer the more easily pronounced Kede. We shall adopt, for the sake of simplicity, this latter name.

[2] See *Africa*, viii, 1935, and also my forthcoming book, *A Black Byzantium*.

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beside fishing and canoeing. Their villages and hamlets are scattered between the Kede settlements all along the river banks.[1] The sharp division, cultural and tribal, between the Kede and the other semi-riverain groups is illustrated in the linguistic usage: for Kede the word *eyapaciʒi* (canoemen), is used almost synonymously, while the other groups are referred to, collectively, as *laticiʒi* (farmers). Tradition, too, has its contribution to make: it represents the Kede as alien immigrants who have come from outside into their present habitat and settled there among the 'aboriginal' population. This tradition (to which we shall return later) is again reflected in linguistic usage, the different semi-riverain groups which to-day are the neighbours of the Kede in the river valley being spoken of, collectively, as *kintsoʒi* (owners of the land—that is, original inhabitants).

We possess detailed population figures only for one part of Kede country, for what is to-day the Kede District of Bida Emirate. But we may take these figures as representative of the whole area inhabited by the Kede.[2] In a total population of 12,066, the Kede number 2,225, and the *kintsoʒi* (comprising various sub-tribes) 9,742, the small rest (99) being made up by non-Nupe strangers who live in Kede District. The Kede thus form a minority in their own country—the country which bears their name. But it rightly bears their name and rightly is called 'their' country, for the Kede minority represents the ruling group, and their chief the ruler of this whole territory and the different groups which inhabit it, Kede as well as non-Kede.

But Kede country is itself part of a larger political system, the Nupe Emirate. In pre-British times, the country of the Kede lay almost entirely on Nupe territory or, more correctly, on the territory ruled by the *Etsu* (king) of Nupe, under whom it enjoyed the status of a semi-autonomous, vassal State. Under British administration, Kede country, greatly affected by the re-alignment of the

[1] They comprise sections of the following Nupe sub-tribes: the Gbedegi on the upper stretch of the Niger; the Bataci, or Marsh Dwellers, on the lower reaches; a few groups of Beni near the confluence of Niger and Kaduna; the Kupa round Eggan in the south; Dibo or ʒitako near Katcha and Baro; and, finally, a group of Nupe from Gbara, the ancient capital of Nupe kingdom, on the Kaduna and on the Niger near Patigi.

[2] These figures are taken from an official, unpublished, provincial census, for the use of which I am greatly indebted to the Administration of Niger Province. While the figures are perhaps not correct in every detail, they are reliable enough for the purpose of this argument.

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political boundaries, came to lie in three different provinces and six different (modern) Emirates or Divisions.[1] However, we shall see later that this distribution of a comparatively small group over so many political divisions is not due entirely to the realignment of political boundaries. It is also a result of movements of Kede groups in recent times, after the political boundaries had been fixed by the present Government.

By far the largest section of the Kede lives on the left bank of the Niger and Kaduna, in Bida Emirate. In this area the Kede have also maintained their political status of a separate political unit, with their own chief as the administrative head. In all other areas the Kede communities are absorbed politically in the districts on whose territory they lie, and live under the local, non-Kede chiefs and district heads.[2] The modern political situation has not, however, obliterated the other features of their social life; the characteristics of their political organization, more specially, live on, though on a smaller scale, in the one area where it has been given official recognition. Although many of our political data will of necessity be derived from this one area, we may again take them to be representative of Kede country at large, and when speaking in the following of Kede, Kede culture and social system, we shall mean the group as a whole, disregarding the modern political subdivisions.

There exists, however, one subdivision of a different nature, deep-seated and of old standing, which we may not ignore. I have spoken so far simply of the Kede. But there exist in reality two Kede groups: the Kede *Tifin*, or upper-stream Kede, and the Kede *Tako*, or down-stream Kede, the boundary between the two groups lying roughly at Jebba Island (the two groups overlap for a short stretch north and south of Jebba).[3] Now, what I have said about the specific features of the Kede social and political system applies only to the down-stream group. The upper-stream Kede show none of the traits which give to the culture of the sister group

[1] The Kede on the right bank of the Niger belong now to Ilorin and Kabba Provinces, and to the Emirates, or political divisions, of Ilorin, Lafiagi, Patigi, and (in the south-west corner) Koton-Karifi. The Kede on the left bank of the Niger and on the River Kaduna belong to Niger Province (formerly Nupe Province) and to the Emirates of Bida, Agaie-Lapai, and Kontagora.

[2] In one place (Ogudu) a certain compromise has been effected, the head of the fairly numerous Kede community acting as a titled 'second-in-command' to the village chief.

[3] The upper-stream Kede are also called Kede *Gbede*, after the Nupe subtribe (Gbede or Gbedegi) with which they share their territory.

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its distinctive character; nor do they share the position of political supremacy which the down-stream Kede have assumed. They are, culturally, a semi-riverain group, like all the other Nupe sections whose villages lie interspersed between Kede settlements, and politically, again like these sections, subjects of the (down-stream) Kede ruling group. Thus when we shall speak in the following of the Kede political organization, we shall refer to this latter group only. The upper-stream Kede will be classified under one heading with the other semi-riverain Nupe sections, as, indeed, in native eyes, they are closer to the *kintsozi* than to the 'alien' immigrant group on the lower river. But the comparison of the two Kede groups will become of special significance at a later stage of this analysis. This strikingly unequal development in what appear to be two sections of the same tribal group should help us to isolate the factors, social or otherwise, that have moulded the political structure which we are studying.

III. Economic System

A demographic and political constellation such as we have discovered in Kede country is clearly the result of considerable group movements, possibly covering a long period. To be fully understood, such situation demands, first of all, an analysis—historical analysis, if possible—of tribal settlement. Before discussing Kede settlement, however, it is necessary to give a short description of the economic situation in the country. For, as I propose to show, the nature of Kede economics has decisively influenced the planning of Kede settlement and, indirectly, the whole political development of the tribe.

We can be very short as regards the economic system of the semi-riverain groups. They are in the main farmers, who cultivate the fertile marshland areas in the river valley. They are, besides, fishermen on a small scale, fishing from their small dug-out canoes in the backwaters and creeks of Niger and Kaduna—never in the main river, where the Kede alone are entitled to fish.

The Kede, on the other hand, are fishermen and canoemen of renown. Their name is known all down the River Niger, in districts far outside Nupe country;[1] and in their own part of the

[1] Their familiarity with the river has led to a considerable number of Kede being employed as sailors, skippers, and pilots by the Royal Niger Company and the Nigerian Marine Department.

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till their villages covered the Niger Valley between Eggan and Jebba. At the time when the first European travellers appeared in Nupe country, we find the Kede already firmly entrenched in this part of the Niger Valley. Now, of the ten main villages of the Kede which exist to-day only one represents an independent, purely Kede settlement—the Kede capital, Muregi. It is a well-built village, with solid houses of sun-dried mud bricks, each compound walled in in Nupe fashion, with a big mosque and an imposing chief's house. It is, as I have said, a pure Kede town, a town inhabited entirely by the 'ruling race'—'*u de talakazi a*', say the Kede ('it contains no poor'—meaning persons belonging to the subject groups). All other Kede settlements, without exception, are built on or near the site of a village of 'original inhabitants'. In most cases the Kede settlement occupies the river bank itself, and the 'native' village the stretch of country immediately behind; in a few cases we find the Kede settlements on an island off the bank occupied by the 'native' village or on the opposite side of the river. The result is something like a twin-village, half 'native' and half Kede. The scene of Kede tradition, a tribal home and emigrant settlements, seems indeed visible in the present-day organization of Kede settlement, with its one all-Kede town and its many 'twin-villages' along the river valley.

The more recent history of Kede settlement remains true to this picture of a gradual territorial expansion. We know that towards the end of last century the Kede settled for the first time on the Kaduna River. Later, under the Royal Niger Company, the Kede were encouraged to extend their settlements still farther on Niger and Kaduna. It is easy to trace these new settlements, which were founded near the European trading posts and other places which had similarly gained commercial importance. Only some thirty years ago the Kede founded their latest 'colony'—on Jebba Island

The villages differ greatly in appearance: some villages boast solidly built permanent houses, while others consist largely of more flimsy buildings, grass-walled huts, suggestive of temporary occupation rather than permanent settlements. The habitations of the Kede reflect the flexible, mobile nature of their system of settlement. The degree of permanence attempted in the buildings at the same time betrays the age of the settlement as well as its (past or present) importance as an economic or

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361 political centre. The Kede settlement at Raba is a typical instance
184 of the more solidly built settlement. It was founded about 1840, when Raba was the capital of Nupe Emirate. The first settlers were five men with their families from Muregi, who belonged to one 'house'; to-day the Kede colony at Raba (which now also possesses a Niger Company storehouse) numbers seven 'houses'.

The Kede settlement at Katcha is an example of the other, poorly built, type, which gives the impression as if the settlers had not yet found time, or had not yet quite decided, to build themselves permanent quarters. The present Kede settlement dates back to 1905–10, at which time a group of Kede who had settled previously at Eggan, on the main river, abandoned this colony for Katcha, attracted by the opportunities of the place. Katcha, on a tributary of the Niger, owed its rise to importance to the introduction of steamer traffic on the Niger and the building of the first Nigerian railway from Baro, through Katcha, to Minna. Its five or six 'houses' of original Kede settlers have now increased to seventeen.

Our list of Kede settlements would not be complete without the mention of the purely temporary riverside camps, meant to last for one season or a few weeks only, which the Kede put up in the larger villages where they are wont to stop on their journeys up and down the river. During the main trading season, Jebba, Patigi, Wuya, or Katcha are crowded with these lightly built shelters, grass-huts, tent-like structures of grass-matting or —crudest of all—the wattle-and-matting awnings of the canoes simply pulled ashore. Kede settlement has not yet come to a standstill. Places which are gaining in importance still attract new groups of immigrants; and the seasonal shelters in a busy trading centre may at any time be turned into permanent quarters, as, indeed, it has happened repeatedly in the course of time.

361 Reviewing the history of Kede settlement, we find its depen-
166 dence on economic factors fully confirmed. We may conceive of it as of a progressive realization of the dictates of the productive system of the country. The Kede, as we have seen, did not occupy new, uninhabited country, but settled in places where an existing population had already established a certain level of social and economic life. In the choice of places for settlement and in their subsequent development, the Kede were invariably guided by commercial considerations. They were, moreover, not satisfied

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examination of the political organization has revealed one such machinery: the machinery of coercion. We must ask now how far other, non-political, forms of integration lend their support, or possibly are made to lend it, to political unification. We can distinguish three types of such supporting integrative agencies: (1) integration through actual co-operation between the sections of the population; (2) integration in the spiritual sphere—in other words, through ideologies teaching or preaching unity; (3) integration based on both. Instances of the first type are economic co-operation and community life, of the second, tradition and mythology, and of the third, religious practice.

VIII. Integrative Mechanisms

Economic Co-operation and Community Life. The propinquity of the Kede and *kintsozi* settlements, combined with the difference in their productive system, invites a certain measure of co-operation in the economic field. The Kede buy farm-produce from their peasant neighbours, who, in turn, use to some extent Kede transport to dispose of their surplus on the large river markets. This co-operation is by no means exclusive and does not lead to complete dependence upon each other. The peasants also sell some of their farm-produce inland or take their fish directly, on their own canoes, to riverside markets; similarly the Kede buy a certain amount of their food on the various outside markets which they visit on their river voyages.

In their community life, the two groups hardly achieve a more intensive, or less casual, co-operation. The difference in occupation and in the main interests of their lives is not balanced by any other strong ties. The young folk of the Kede and *kintsozi* frequently join in each other's dances; here and there friendships are struck between individuals from the two groups. But apart from these contacts the two sections keep to themselves. The age-grade associations do not stretch across the tribal boundary and, above all, there is almost no inter-marriage: the *kintsozi* arrange their marriages with their tribal relations inland, and the Kede marry among themselves.[1] In these marriages between Kede villages distance plays no part, which is rather significant, for the (inland) Nupe generally dislike marriages between distant places.

[1] This is true of all the older Kede settlements; in the more recent settlements (e.g. Katcha) I found a few cases of inter-marriage with the *kintsozi*.

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is, in the influence upon actual social life which the belief in this 'truth' entails. The Kede tradition of origin, as we have seen, concerns itself above all with the beginnings of the political history of the tribe. In the fashion of such myths of origin, it anchors the existing system in a dim past, which, by its very remoteness and its supernatural and sacred associations, endows the present with an immensely convincing validity. The Kede tradition of origin ranges its strongest spiritual support behind what we now recognize to be the two fundamental features of their political system: the fact that the extent of Kede rule is defined on the basis of locality, and not tribe, and the fact that, within the larger political unit of Nupe kingdom, the Kede claim a semi-autonomous position. Let me emphasize that the knowledge of this tradition is not limited to the Kede, but is common to all Nupe sections, and among them the various *kintsoʒi* groups. The common possession of the myth represents a spiritual link of utmost importance: for with the myth the subjects of the Kede also accept the system which it is meant to guarantee—the overlordship of the Kede.

Religion. As I have mentioned, the Kede are to-day Mohammedans—very eager Mohammedans, in fact. In many settlements you will find *mallams* teaching the Koran to boys and adults, often pupils who are able to attend the classes only when their travels happen to take them to this place and allow them a short sojourn. The *kintsoʒi*, on the other hand, are still largely pagans. Moreover, against the solid religious unity of the Kede, the *kintsoʒi* show a certain diversity of religious rites and beliefs, which reflects the composite nature of this group.[1] However, there exist two rituals, both essentially river rituals, which are common to all the semi-riverain groups, and a third ritual, linked with the memory of Tsoede, which exists in all the larger riverain (and partly also inland) villages of Nupe. The first of these rituals is the *Nddduma* (the Nupe name for the River Niger), an annual sacrifice to the spirits of the river, performed in all the different river villages

[1] We cannot say what the religious situation in the river valley has been in the earlier periods of Nupe history. The probability is that the Kede, as most Nupe sub-tribes, possessed certain special rites and beliefs, which were not shared by the other tribal groups. The characteristic difference between Kede and *kintsoʒi* to-day, between a solid religious unit on one side and a heterogeneous religious group on the other, would thus have been equally marked in the pre-Islamic era.

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and believed to procure, and at the same time to keep within limits, the annual flooding of the Niger. The second ritual is the *Ketsá*, a sacrifice to the spirit of the huge rock of the same name which rises abruptly from midstream near Jebba (known to Europeans as Juju-rock); this sacrifice is believed to cure illness and barrenness and to secure luck in fishing or trade. The third ritual is the sacrifice to the *Chain of Tsoede*, a sacred relic which secures fertility, prevents illness, and is also used as an instrument of ordeal.

Now, these three rituals also occur among the Kede; the first two have in fact been, as it were, usurped by them, and made to some extent their own concern. The Kede chief holds himself responsible for certain special, most conspicuous, performances of these river ceremonies. Once a year a special *Ndáduma* is performed in a place called Bazumagi, north of Jebba, the *Kuta* himself providing the sacrificial food, a white bull and honey. Unlike the local *Ndáduma* rituals, the *Ndáduma* of Bazumagi is enacted on behalf, not of a particular village, but of the whole population of the river valley. The chief's *Ndáduma* also shows another feature which is absent in the local rite: the priest climbs a rock in midstream and throws a stone towards the bank; the spot where the stone falls is believed to mark the line to which the river will rise that year. The *Ketsá* becomes a chief's ritual at the appointment of a new *Kuta*. About one month after his accession the new chief sends a bull (preferably white) to Jebba Island to be sacrificed there by the local priest, again on behalf of the whole riverain community, to inaugurate and secure a prosperous reign. A special *Chain of Tsoede* finally is kept in Muregi, in the house of one of the chief's councillors (see p. 176). He performs the annual sacrifice of beer and the blood of a sheep, beer and animal being again provided by the *Kuta* himself.

It is interesting to note that in none of these rituals may the *Kuta* or any member of his family be present. Thus the double nature of these rites, which, though stamped chief's rituals, are essentially rituals of the *kintsozi*, is conspicuously symbolized. The interests which they voice—the securing of safety and livelihood to the people on the river—are adopted and made their own by the Kede rulers. A single belief and a common cult comprise both rulers and ruled, notwithstanding the religious barriers which otherwise separate the two, and add to the political dependence of the *kintsozi* another, spiritual, dependence.

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dependence on economic factors and, tied up with them, environmental conditions. The impetus to colonization and expansion, as we saw it, was already implied in the way in which the people gain their livelihood. We can render this argument even more conclusive; the cultural situation in the river valley itself offers us the comparative material from which to draw our deductions. We remember the upper-stream Kede, who, neighbours, fellow tribesmen and in many details of culture close relations of the down-stream Kede, yet do not share their political achievements—and also do not share their productive system and economic life in general. We can even go further and point to the environmental factors on which the economic system of the Kede in turn depends. The environment in which the upper-stream Kede live indeed forbids a development of river trade and traffic similar to that evolved by the sister group. The river in their area is narrow, barred in several places by rapids and rocky, frequently dangerous, passages, and generally impassable during half the year. On its banks there are few settlements, and the hinterland is thinly populated, inhabited largely by comparatively poor and backward groups. Hold against this the down-stream country: a broad river, navigable all the year round, the banks covered with numerous villages and the hinterland a rich, populous country with highly developed trades and crafts.

It will have been seen that I am speaking here of environment in a rather wide sense, including, beside the physical constellation of the country, also such factors as distribution of population and the existence of a certain type of civilization. Methodologically, these facts stand in the same category as physical environment proper. True, they are essentially historical facts, representing the results of various historical developments. These developments themselves, however, are beyond our line of vision; their results—the fact that the Kede area happens to lie in the centre of a rich and powerful kingdom—are to us 'unique events' in the phraseology of the historian, extraneous factors of chance, which, like environmental facts, we have to accept as ultimate data.

Let me admit that this causal chain, environmental conditions—economic enterprise—political system, is not fully conclusive. It is weakened by another aspect of our comparative evidence—namely, the fact that the *kintsozi*, who are also close neighbours and tribal relations of the down-stream Kede, and who share with